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Theory and Reality of the Varṇa System

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東洋文庫

Tokyo
The Toyo Bunko
2005

Published by

the Toyo Bunko

2-28-21 Honkomagome,
Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo, 113-0021, Japan

ISBN 4-8097-0197-2

Published through a special subvention from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology for the year 2004.

Printed by
TOKYO PRESS Co., LTD.
Itabashi, Tokyo Japan

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PREFACE

Upon embarking on what would become an over forty-year academic career in the pursuit of an historical study of ancient India, my attention was first drawn to the legend surrounding King Aśoka of the Mauryan Dynasty, leading to an analysis of the Sanskrit, Pāli and Classical Chinese sources related to him.[1] That was the 1950s, a time when the Japanese historical community had become deeply concerned with the social and economic issues of the past. Consequently, in addition to continued study of the Aśoka tradition, I turned my efforts to such socio-economic aspects of ancient India as slavery, untouchability and land ownership. It was then that the ancient varṇa system drew my attention, eventually leading to two Japanese language volumes of research.[2] During that time, in order to help deepen my understanding of the varṇa system historically, I decided to study the modern and contemporary caste system in India, which resulted in a Japanese language volume on the life and ideas of B. R. Ambedkar.[3]

The present volume of research began with an invitation from SATO Tsugitaka, Head of Research at The Toyo Bunko, to participate in a new English Language series, entitled the Toyo Bunko Research Library (TBRL). While I was indeed honored to have been asked to contribute a volume to what promises to be a very important international venue for Japanese scholars to present their research to the English speaking world, I must admit that I was at first bewildered about what the volume should contain. Finally, I decided to focus on the varṇa system by selecting eleven chapters from the above two volumes composed of twenty-nine chapters on ancient Indian society; dealing with brāhmaṇas (3 chapters), kṣatriyas (3), vaiśyas (2), and śūdras/untouchables (3) in a single four-part English version. As the reader may already be aware, Japanese Indologists have tended to concentrate their efforts in the fields of philosophy and Buddhism, research that has realized much international renown. As indicated by its title, the present volume offers a rather different approach to ancient India, indicating the diversity that actually exists in the Japanese Indology community.

I would like to dedicate this volume to five scholars, without whose patience, knowledge and deep insights, this volume would never have seen the light of day: the late Dr. ENOKI Kazuo, the late Dr. YAMAMOTO Tatsuro, and Drs. ARA

[1] *The Legend of Aśoka, A Critical Study* (in Japanese), Shunjūsha Publ. Co., Tokyo, 1979.
[2] *Society in Ancient India, Social Structure & Middle and Low Classes* (in Japanese), Tōsuishobō Publ. Co., Tokyo, 1986; *Kingship and Religion in Ancient India, Kings and Brāhmaṇas* (in Japanese), Tōsuishobō Publ. Co., Tokyo, 1994.
[3] *Indian Society and Neo-Buddhism* (in Japanese), Tokyo, 1979.

Matsuo, YAMAZAKI Toshio, and KARASHIMA Noboru. Regarding the publication of this volume, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to The Toyo Bunko, especially Director SHIBA Yoshinobu and Head of Research SATO, for allowing me to participate in the TBRL project, to the Research Department's editor-in-chief MATSUMOTO Akira for his helpful ideas about how to put the volume together, and John Wisnom, a Toyo Bunko language consultant, for his help in preparing the English language text.

March 2005

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ABBREVIATIONS

AN.	*Aṅguttara Nikāya*
Āp.	*Āpastamba Dharmasūtra*
Arth.	*Arthaśāstra*
Baudh.	*Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra*
Bṛh.	*Bṛhaspati-smṛti*
Divyāv.	*Divyāvadāna*
DN.	*Dīgha Nikāya*
Gaut.	*Gautama Dharmasūtra*
J.	*Jātaka*
Kāty.	*Kātyāyana-smṛti*
Manu	*Manu-smṛti*
MN.	*Majjhima Nikāya*
Nār.	*Nārada-smṛti*
PTS.	Pāli Text Society
SBE.	*Sacred Books of the East*
SN.	*Saṃyutta Nikāya*
Taishō	*Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō*
Vās.	*Vāsiṣṭha Dharmasūtra*
Viṣ.	*Viṣṇu-smṛti*
VP.	*Vinaya Piṭaka*
Yāj.	*Yājñavalkya-smṛti*

INTRODUCTION

Indian social structure is made up of four stratified varṇas—brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya and śūdra—in addition to sub-varṇa inferior classes. The varṇa system was established in the upper Ganga basin during the middle of the Later Vedic Age (c.1000-600 BC), and from that time on spread throughout the Indian subcontinent along with Aryan migration and cultural transmission. Then, from the medieval period onward, castes (*jāti*) began to be formed within the larger varṇa framework, and a social system was formed based on an inter-caste division of labor. There has always been a gap between the ideals of the varṇa system and its actual implementation; also, the system (including sub-varṇa classes) formed during the ancient period varied in influence depending on any particular region or era. Nevertheless, the most important characteristic is that the system has stubbornly survived to the present day, despite the fact that we do not notice it readily in everyday life.

The purpose of the present volume of research is to examine the question of the ideals and practical implementation of the varṇa system, in order to clarify in concrete terms the structure and characteristic features of ancient Indian society. Such a study should then provide us with helpful hints about in what ways the various elements of that society developed and changed throughout the rest of Indian history. The source materials used in this study can be divided into three different genres: 1) the works of Hindu law (the *Dharmasūtras* and *Dharamaśāstras*), 2) Pāli language Buddhist works (mainly the *Jātakas*), and 3) Kauṭilya's *Arthaśāstra*. Although I have used other sources, such as the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyana*, the Chinese Tripiṭaka and epigraphy elsewhere, the present volume will only touch upon these latter sources indirectly. The reason for choosing the above three genres for the work at hand is because they provide us with three different representative points of view about the varṇa system: that is, from the standpoints of 1) the orthodoxy of brahmanism, 2) the "hereticism" of Buddhist thought and 3) ancient political thought. It should also be mentioned here that no historical works, such as official chronicles, were recorded (or if recorded were scattered and lost) during the period in question, forcing us to turn to above three types of religious and theoretical sources as the only alternative, despite their obvious flaws (biases) and lack of uniformity, in obtaining an idea about how ancient Indian society actually functioned. One more reason for selecting these three genres of sources has to do with the fact that they have been both widely and deeply read as the basic materials for studying all aspects of ancient India, resulting in the compilation of critical and revised editions of them. It is my belief that a thorough historical examination of these fundamental sources will give us a foothold for an assault on the huge amount

of religious and literary sources that remain to be examined. Let us look a little closer at the sources selected for the present study.

1. The Works of Hindu Law

This genre of materials prescribes all of the obligations demanded of the members of varṇa society as set down by orthodox brahmanism. The classic works, called the *Dharmasūtras*, include the *Āpastamba*, *Gautama*, *Vāsiṣṭha*, and *Baudhāyana*, which were compiled between 600 and 300 BC. Then there is the *Mānava-Dharmaśāstra*, better known as the *Manu-smṛti*, which was compiled between 200 BC and 200 AD and further substantiates and supplements the *Dharmasūtras*. This *smṛti* has been handed down to the present day as the most authoritative code for determining the norms by which Hindus were required to live their lives. Finally, there are the later works of Hindu law, which include the *Yājñavalkya-*, *Viṣṇu-*, *Nārada-*, *Bṛhaspati-*, and *Kātyāyana-smṛtis*, compiled between 100 and 600 AD. It is not clear where exactly these compilations were done, but there is enough possibility for assuming that they were written by orthodox brāhmaṇa scholars based in the upper and middle reaches of the Ganga, or brāhmaṇas who were influenced by their ideas. Although the works of Hindu law are theoretical treatises rather than codes of civil law or royal edicts, their provisions still reflect the social norms of the period; and given the leadership role played by brāhmaṇas in ancient Indian society, their provisions might surely have possessed authority over daily life. It is in this sense that the works of Hindu law are very important sources for the study of ancient Indian social history. The citation here will be based on the chapter, section, and clause numbers of *The Sacred Books of the East* series and the Sanskrit editions on which those renditions depended. In addition, reference was made to P. Olivelle's annotated texts and translation of the *Dharmasūtras*, A. F. Stenzlar's edition and translation of the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* and P. V. Kane's edition and translation of the *Kātyāyana-smṛti*.

2. The Pāli Buddhist Sources

The earliest sources in this genre depict social aspects of Indian society in the middle and lower reaches of the Ganga from the time of the Buddha (sixth-fifth century BC) up to around the first century BC. In particular, the *Jātaka* collection of Buddhist fables vividly describes life during that time among all the varṇas in both their urban and rural settings. Although the story lines themselves have been fabricated to illustrate Buddhist teachings, the social background which they unfold faithfully reflects reality. They may also enable us to observe social change by comparing stories over a span of generations, but it is very difficult to tell which of the differing aspects is the older and which is the newer development. Here we have

relied on the compilations done by the Pāli Text Society. In addition, a Sanskrit collection of Buddhist tales, the *Divyāvadāna*, compiled around the third and fourth centuries AD will be referred to here and there.

3. The *Arthaśāstra*

This work is a treatise on politics written by Kauṭilya, a chancellor of the early Mauryan Dyanasty. If the tradition surrounding the work is indeed factual, it was completed around 300 BC; however, like all the works of ancient India, there is room for serious doubt about dating. Since the work was first discovered only a century ago, debate has continued over both its true author and date of completion. I myself support the view that revisions were made to Kauṭilya's original version later on, resulting in the extant version, which should be dated between the second and third centuries AD. It was probably compiled in the middle and lower reaches of the Ganga, the home territory of the Mauryan Dynasty, just about the same region as described in the Buddhist sources. R. P. Kangle's edition and translation of the work will be used here.

Turning to the content of the present volume, Part One takes up social issues surrounding the brāhmaṇa varṇa. Chapter I examines how this varṇa, which has been the paramount class within Hindu society for over three thousand years, has managed to preserve its supremacy over such a long period of time. One way was no doubt the flexibility displayed by brāhmaṇas when faced with reality, as exemplified by brahmanic ideas about inter-varṇa marriage and childbirth (*varṇasaṃkara*), ideas about how to act when faced with life and death situations (*āpaddharma*), rites of purification (*prāyaścitta*), and ideas of fallen or decadent kṣatriyas (*vrātya-kṣatriya*). Other topics concerning the flexibility of brāhmaṇas include their relationship to kingship, the formation of Hinduism and the brāhmaṇa attitude towards the śūdra (once-born) varṇa. Such flexibility on the part of brāhmaṇas led to the flexible character of the whole varṇa system, enabling it to transcend the social and political changes that occurred throughout India's history.

The examination of the related Buddhist sources reveals that there were members of the brāhmaṇa varṇa who were engaged in occupations other than their priestly duties, secular occupations not sanctioned by Vedic law. Chapter II continues with the depiction of the brāhmaṇa varṇa contained in the Buddhist sources, in comparison with the works of Hindu law. Focus is then placed on the criticism leveled by the Buddha himself at those brāhmaṇas who were unable to live up to the high ideals of their varṇa.

Although in theory, varṇa society was supposed to be ruled ritually and morally by the brāhmaṇa priesthood and politically by the kṣatriya aristocracy, in reality the religious and secular worlds could not avoid overlapping to some extent. In

Chapter III we turn to the problem of how brāhmaṇas strove to maintain their social supremacy while at the same time maintaining close ties to kingship. They did this by insisting that their supremacy over kṣatriyas lay in the varṇa ritual order. The former also demanded various privileges in exchange for the roles they played in strengthening kingship and bringing prosperity to the state. Acceding to such demands, kings guaranteed brāhmaṇas their livelihood under the condition that the latter render service in various ways, resulting in many brāhmaṇas deciding to subordinate themselves to royalty.

Part Two deals with the various issues surrounding the kṣatriya varṇa, which we discover formed both a fairly ambiguous and complex group, since in addition to their political and military duties, beginning with kingship, there were many members involved in other occupations as well as members of other varṇas involved in the arts of politics and war. Chapter IV mainly utilizes the Buddhist sources to identify three different lines of kṣatriyas existing in the Ganga basin from the Buddha's time through the reign of the Mauryan Dynasty. On the other hand, there were cases in which powerful non-Aryan forces and groups on the periphery of Aryan society were incorporated into Hindu society as kṣatriyas. These upstarts were frequently recognized as kṣatriyas by orthodox brāhmaṇas in an attempt to put them to the task of maintaining the varṇa order. It was the flexibility of the kṣatriya varṇa, represented by both openness and mobility, that contributed so much to the reproduction and maintenance of the varṇa social order.

Chapters V and VI compose a comparison between the ideas of kingship described in the works of Hindu law and those in Buddhist sources, with an appendix that adds the *Arthaśāstra* to the comparison. For example, in contrast to Hindu law and the *Arthaśāstra* arguing that kings should act as protectors of the varṇa social order, the Buddhist sources argue that what kings were supposed to protect was a more abstract version of the *dharma*. Buddhism also criticized the idea of the divine nature of kingship held by Hindu law, while the *Arthaśāstra* coolly states that the idea is nothing but superstition; however, if such nonsense is useful in strengthening kingship and the kingdom, then it should by all means be adopted. More flexibility in the varṇa system is displayed by the fact that kings with other than kṣatriya origins could accede temporarily to the throne if the existence of the social order would in some way be threatened otherwise.

Part Three deals with the vaiśya varṇa, the members of which were theoretically of Aryan (twice-born) origin and were supposed to be involved in agriculture, animal husbandry and commerce. However, in reality this varṇa was composed of a wide variety of people, including some whose wealth exceeded that of members of the kṣatriya and brāhmaṇa ruling classes and others whose social position could not be distinguished in quality from that of the śūdra varṇa inferior to it. It was during the formative period of Buddhism in the middle and lower reaches of the Ganga that members of the vaiśya class were active in the rise of urban areas and the

development of rural society. Buddhist scripture is the best source for discovering the actual nature of such activities.

Chapter VII deals with vaiśyas active as merchants in the cities, while Chapter VIII focuses on them in village life. One interesting discovery from the Buddhist sources is that vaiśyas were far less conscious of their varṇa in everyday life than of their occupations, kinship relations, and social position which was based on wealth. This lack of varṇa consciousness contrasts starkly with the upper two varṇas, especially the system's standard bearers, the brāhmaṇas. Over time, the division made between the vaiśya and śūdra grew more and more ambiguous, until the former came to signify the commercial classes, while the latter came to include the peasant class of cultivators and herders. The Appendix to Chapter VII takes up city life as depicted in the Buddhist sources, while the Appendix to Chapter VIII discusses rural life and land ownership as seen in the works of Hindu law and the *Arthaśāstra*.

Part Four is concerned with the lowest śūdra varṇa and the sub-varṇa inferior group of untouchables known as caṇḍālas. In Chapter IX we look at the socially and ritually discriminatory treatment recommended by Hindu law concerning the śūdra varṇa, then turn to the Buddhist sources and the *Arthaśāstra*, discovering the actual diversified character of the varṇa and its members' lack of varṇa consciousness in daily life, thus revealing a great discrepancy between the severe discrimination leveled at śūdras in the works of Hindu law and what was happening in reality. We also find that a good portion of the members of the śūdra varṇa became independent cultivators over time; and despite regional differences, on the whole we observe the Vedic discrimination against śūdras tending towards extinction, to the extent of śūdras forming the general masses of Hindu society during the medieval period. Two Appendices appear on slavery and wage labor in ancient India.

Chapter X turns to the social and ritual discrimination leveled towards the group of untouchables, called caṇḍālas, who existed at the lowest echelon of the sub-varṇa inferior strata and had originated mainly from hunters and gatherers dwelling in the forests on the periphery of Aryan agrarian society. An examination of the Buddhist sources reveals that the kind of discrimination prescribed in Hindu law regarding śūdras was in practice not as severe as we would otherwise have been led to think; however, these same Buddhist sources point to little difference between Hindu law and social reality concerning the strict segregation for caṇḍālas. It also seems that due to the existence of untouchables, the class relations existing within varṇa society were solidified as ritual status relationships, making the existence of untouchables indispensable to the continuation of the varṇa social order. The chapter's first Appendix is an overview of India's forest regions and their residents and the second Appendix deals with the theory of miscegenation among the varṇas (*varṇasaṃkara*).

Stratification in varṇa society was based on levels of ritual purity and defilement with the pristine brāhmaṇas at the top and filthiest caṇḍālas at the bottom; however, no matter how brāhmaṇas strove to avoid contact with untouchables, complete segregation was impossible in real life. Chapter XI introduces the Buddhist critique of such discriminatory ideas. There is the *dharma* (eternal truth) that exists over and above doctrinal differences of orthodox and unorthodox sects. In explaining such a universal nature of the *dharma*, not only Buddhist literature, but also orthodox brahmanic works often turn to anecdotes in which varṇa society's two opposite poles come into contact, examples of which are offered in the present chapter.

Finally, the "Epilogue" discusses the evolvement of the varṇa system during India's medieval period and offers a hypothesis about the formation of caste society from the following three standpoints: 1) the formation of castes (*jāti*) within the varṇa framework, 2) the formation of a structure of social discrimination based on the dichotomy of "caste Hindu" vs. "untouchable" in the midst of the increasing development of untouchability, and 3) the formation of a rural society based on occupational specialization according to caste.

Looking back on the huge amount of historical research that has been done on the subject utilizing our three genres of sources, what stands out is the work of P. V. Kane on the works of Hindu law and that of R. Fick on the ancient society described in the Buddhist sources, although this work is more than a century old. Concerning the research on the various varṇas, there is the work done on the śūdras by R. S. Sharma. While R. Thapar has depicted the development of social formations of northern India "from linage to state." Needless to say, I have learned much from these studies and the other splendid work available on the subject, however, what characterizes the present volume of research within the researches to date on ancient Indian society is the attempt to approach reality by comparing the three genres (especially orthodox [brāhmaṇa] and unorthodox [Buddhist] views), which were compiled in the Ganga basin at about the same time in history. Another characteristic of the approach adopted here is to clarify the internal structure of the varṇa order from the standpoint of brāhmaṇas and caṇḍālas, the two poles in that world. To stress this standpoint, I will discuss brāhmaṇas in the first chapter, then conclude with caṇḍālas in chapters X and XI. Finally, throughout the volume, I have tried never to lose sight of the viewpoint that the caste society, which developed in medieval India and continues to exert influence on Indian society today, was formed within the framework of the varṇa order which originated in ancient times and has stubbornly and flexibly survived through the vicissitude of Indian history.

Part One THE BRĀHMAṆA: PROPONENTS FOR THE VARṆA SYSTEM

Chapter I

BRĀHMAṆAS AND THE VARṆA SYSTEM: AN OVERVIEW[1]

Introduction

The brāhmaṇa varṇa, India's class of priests, has been the transmitters of orthodox religion and Hindu ideas for nearly three thousand years and has also maintained for that same amount of time its position as the top ranking stratum in Indian society's traditional ritual order. From early on in the research concerning Indian society, brāhmaṇas have naturally drawn much attention with respect to the role they played in the formation of the varṇa/caste system. For example, at the end of the nineteenth century, J. C. Nesfield, in his study of the caste in India, argued that it was its priests, engaged in the most prestigious form of occupation, who first formed an endogamous caste group, and then their example was followed by all the other occupations.[2] At about the same time, É. Senart suggested that 1) the varṇa system advocated by the brāhmaṇas lent religious rigor and solemnity to the norms surrounding the caste institution, and 2) with the brāhmaṇa class placed in the center of the complex caste society, social order and integration was achieved.[3]

However, when looking back on the history of Indian society, the position of the brāhmaṇas was by no means stable, since it was often threatened by the rise of

[1] This chapter, being an overview of the brāhmaṇa varṇa, contains a very small number of footnotes. The major works referred to in writing it are as follows: P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. I-V, Poona, 1930-62. N. K. Dutt, *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, Vol. I, London, 1931, 2nd ed., Calcutta, 1968. L. Dumont, *Homo Hierarchicus, The Caste System and Its Implications*, Revised Eng. ed., Chicago, 1980. G. P. Upadhyay, *Brāhmaṇas in Ancient India, A Study in the Role of the Brāhmaṇa Class from c.200 B.C. to c.A.D.500*, New Delhi, 1979. R. Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History*, New Delhi, 1978. Do., *From Lineage to State, Social Formations in the Mid-First Millennium B.C. in the Ganga Valley*, Bombay, 1984. R. S. Sharma, *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India*, New Delhi, 1983. P. Olivelle, *The Āśrama System, The History and Hermeneutics of a Religious Institution*, New York, 1993. M. N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*, Bombay, 1962. Do., *Social Change in Modern India*, Poona, 1972.

[2] J. C. Nesfield, *Brief View of the Caste System of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, Allahabad, 1885, pp. 26-27, 87-116.

[3] É. Senart, *Les castes dans l'Inde, les faits et le système*, Paris, 1896, English tr. by E. D. Ross, London, 1930, pp. 88, 197-98, 211-13.

such "unorthodox" religions as Buddhism and Jainism, not to mention the penetration of foreign people into India. The question to be asked, therefore, is how brāhmaṇas managed to overcome such crisis and maintain their superior social position. In order to answer that question, it is first necessary to clarify the characteristic features of the brāhmaṇa varṇa. The research on brāhmaṇas has been done mainly from the perspectives of religion, philosophy, ritual and linguistics. In this chapter, however, I would like to consider brāhmaṇas as a social group and outline the role they played in the formation, development and maintenance of the varṇa/caste system, an examination that will hopefully result in further clarification of why the varṇa system, with brāhmaṇas at its apex, has managed to survive for such a long period of time.

1. Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas

A. The Formation and Development of the Brāhmaṇa Varṇa

When Aryans first entered India and were occupied mainly in pastoral activities supplemented by cultivation in the Punjab, during the Early Vedic Age (c.1500-1000 BC), the occupation of priest in their tribally organized communities tended to be handed down from father to son, but the occupation was not yet exclusionary in any way. Then, during the Later Vedic Age (c.1000-600 BC), when Aryans advanced into the upper reaches of the Ganga basin and formed agrarian communities, social stratification progressed, resulting in the formation of three classes/varṇas: the brāhmaṇa priesthood, a class of warriors and aristocrats known as kṣatriyas, and a class of cultivators, herders and merchants known as vaiśyas. All of the young males of these three varṇas would go through an initiation ceremony (*upanayana*) for the purpose of studying the Veda, a rite of passage considered to be their second birth, making them *dvija* (twice-born). In addition, below these three *dvija* classes was placed a servile class of śūdras: consisting mainly of indigenous people who lived in the region prior to the Aryan settlement, who were not allowed to go through the *upanayana* and were thus called *ekaja* (once-born). Eventually all four varṇas became mutually endogamous, with the brāhmaṇa varṇa playing the leading role among them. The region of the upper Ganga where this system was first established became the homeland of the orthodox brāhmaṇa priesthood. The formation process of the varṇa system can be explained as follows.

As the importance of ritual increased in agrarian society, priests seized such an opportunity to establish and maintain their social status. They developed complicated ritualistic ceremonies and organized endogamous groups to pass their know-how to their heirs, insisting that they were "mediators between gods and men," "the purest bred members of their race," and "actually divine beings in the guise of humans." They also claimed that they could move the gods to action

through their Vedic ceremonies. The varṇa name "*brāhmaṇa*" (a masculine noun) indicates a person who possesses the magical powers (*brahman*, a neuter noun) of the Veda's holy words. Originally, the person who presided over the ritual proceeding was called "*brāhmaṇa*" (a masculine noun), and with the establishment of the varṇa system, the same term came to refer to the first and foremost varṇa.

The Later Vedic Age was also a period that saw the development of kingship, and while during this varṇa-formation period there seems to have been conflicts between brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas over the foremost position in the system, in the broader social sense, the two varṇas manipulated one another in ruling over the vaiśya and śūdra majority. That is to say, kṣatriyas began to recognize the superiority of the brāhmaṇa varṇa and supported its members through almsgiving, while brāhmaṇas conducted ceremonies, beginning with the enthronement ritual, thus ensuring the sanctity and legitimacy of kṣatriya kingship. Furthermore, brāhmaṇas employed their magical powers to protect kings and their realms from the danger and misfortune they had predicted. They claimed that "a brāhmaṇa who is a protector of the kṣatriya varṇa is superior to the rest of his varṇa; and a kṣatriya who is supported by brāhmaṇas is superior to the rest of his varṇa" and that "prosperity can be achieved only by the mutual investment of authority between the two varṇas."

The theory behind the varṇa system was first formulated by various schools of brāhmaṇas during the Post-Vedic Age (c.600-300 BC),[4] in the *Dharmasūtras* and later in the *Dharmaśāstras*, the most important of which was the *Manu-smṛti* (compiled between 200 BC and 200 AD). Here is the theoretical framework offered by these two compilations of classical Hindu law.

(1) Human society consists of four varṇas that mutually differ in terms of both function and purity. The brāhmaṇa varṇa occupies the foremost position and the śūdra varṇa the lowest. (In reality, a fifth varṇa of "untouchables" existed below the śūdra.)
(2) Because being born into the present world is the result of one's deeds (*karma*) in the previous world, one cannot be separated from the varṇa he was born into.
(3) By accepting the fate of one's birth into the present world and being concerned only with performing the duties of one's varṇa (*svadharma*), one can ensure a better fate in the next world.

[4] Buddhism was also formed during the Post-Vedic Age. While there are researchers who argue that Gotama Buddha lived sometime during the 5th and 4th centuries BC, this author holds to the conventional view of 566-486 BC. See G. Yamazaki, "The Lists of the Patriarchs in the Northern and Southern Legends," *The Dating of the Historical Buddha* (H. Bechert ed.), Part I, Göttingen, 1991, pp. 313-25. Do. "Importance of the Dotted Record," *Indian Journal of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. VI-1/2 (1994), pp. 25-27. Reprinted in *The Date of Historical Śākyamuni Buddha* (A. K. Narain ed.), Delhi, 2003, pp. 147-50.

(4) In order to maintain the necessary purity of each varṇa, one must strictly follow the rules of his varṇa concerning marriage, food, occupation, etc.

This varṇa ideology was to play an important role in promoting the formation of caste society in medieval India from about the sixth century onward. At that time, within the framework of each of the five larger varṇas (including the untouchables) many smaller castes (called *jāti*) were created along occupational, tribal and religious lines and were located in a superior-inferior social hierarchy.

The varṇa system is something that determined the larger social framework, but as will be discussed later, in reality it by no means always functioned in a determinative way. In ancient times, people who were conscious of their varṇas in everyday life and acted accordingly were limited to brāhmaṇas and a portion of kṣatriyas; however, in special cases related to such things as ritual or the social order in general, the issue of one's varṇa would always be raised. This consciousness can probably also be said to exist in caste society in modern and contemporary times. For example, many of the castes that tried to elevate their rank within the established order argued that they had originated from higher varṇas like the brāhmaṇa and the kṣatriya. While the influence and authority of the varṇa system fluctuated according to both region and era, it has continued to the present day as an institution determining the framework of Indian society, even if all are not always conscious of it in their everyday lives.

B. Kingship and the Brāhmaṇa Varṇa

In principle, the varṇa system separates church and state. However, there are aspects in which the sacred and profane overlap, and brāhmaṇas, who are in charge of the sacred world, become involved in the profane by:

(1) maintaining the ritual purity of and bringing prosperity to the royal family and its kingdom through ceremonial acts, and
(2) instructing the king and the people about the essence of the social order (the socially stratified order arising from the varṇa system) based on the sacred law (*dharma*).

The latter was important from a political standpoint, because the kingdoms of ancient India had by and large no systematic secular codes of law, and in many cases it was Hindu law transmitted by brāhmaṇas that was used both directly and indirectly to substitute for such a lack. According to the provisions in Hindu law, the king was not the promulgator of the *dharma*, but was rather the protector of the lives and property of the people based on the sacred scripture as taught by brāhmaṇas. In other words, the king, who was required to maintain the varṇa-based social order, exercised *daṇḍa* (military force and penal action) on the advice of

brāhmaṇas.

Since the essential means of livelihood for brāhmaṇas was alms, they often moved around in search of patrons and consequently ended up spreading their culture all over the Indian subcontinent. For these brāhmaṇas, the ultimate patron was the kings, who would call them from remote areas and bestow upon them land or villages to insure their livelihoods. In response to royal expectations, brāhmaṇas who settled on this donated land would promote the maintenance of the local social order, the improvement of local culture, and the expansion of arable (in many cases through tenancy and wage labor). Brāhmaṇas also contributed to the kingdom by providing a supply of elite bureaucrats supporting kingship in such aspects as jurisprudence and administration.

However, the superior status enjoyed by brāhmaṇas under the varṇa system was often infringed upon by kingship. For example, during the third century BC, King Aśoka of the Mauryan Dynasty widely advocated his own *dharma* based on Buddhist thought and went as far as to denounce brāhmaṇic ceremonies that involved animal sacrifice. On the other hand, Aśoka stressed the important role played by brāhmaṇas in maintaining order in regional society and continually told the people within his realm to respect brāhmaṇas (along with ascetics who had renounced the world, village elders, etc). In general, brāhmaṇas insisted upon their superiority over kṣatriyas in matters relating to ritual, and kṣatriyas recognized their claims. However, in every day life, brāhmaṇas subordinated themselves to the king, assuming a flexible attitude in the hope of being guaranteed social position and income by carrying out the duties imparted to them. This latter reality is clearly shown in the brāhmaṇa characters that appear in such literary works as the *Jātaka* collection of Buddhist tales.

This flexible, some would say "convenient," attitude shown by brāhmaṇas towards kṣatriyas was also shown towards foreign conquerers. In principle, brāhmaṇas looked upon people who lived beyond the borders of varṇa society as unclean barbarians (*mleccha*) and even taught that contact with them should be avoided, while on the other hand, preparing various means by which to assimilate such people into varṇa society. The idea of *vrātya* is one example. According to this idea, such foreign people were believed to have been originally twice-born varṇa members, but out of disrespect for brāhmaṇas and failure to perform their religious obligations, they came to be treated as *vrātyas*, who had fallen to the level of śūdras. The people indicated as *vrātyas* fallen from the kṣatriya varṇa in the *Manusmṛti* (X, 21-23, 44) include the Colas and the Dravidas of southern India, and the Greeks (Yavanas) and the Śakas who had migrated to northwest India.[5] Therefore, they could be "reinstated" in varṇa society as kṣatriyas as soon as they performed their essential duties under the guidance of brāhmaṇas. The existence of a rein-

[5] See Table III of p. 217 of this volume.

statement ceremony for *vrātyas* (*vrātyastoma*) has been known from early on. For brāhmaṇas, life under the protection of reinstated kṣatriyas was perfectly in line with Hindu law. It was the existence of such versatility exemplified by the conceptualization of *vrātya* that made it possible for foreign people and tribes living on the periphery of Aryan (varṇa) society to be assimilated into it.

Also on the periphery, there were not only cases of mulatto brāhmaṇas being born from the union between immigrating brāhmaṇas and indigenous women, but also cases of indigenous people studying Vedic ritual and calling themselves brāhmaṇas. The existence of such half- and non-Aryan brāhmaṇas can be observed at a fairly early stage in the history of the varṇa system, and their numbers increased as Aryan society expanded its frontier. Similarly, native peoples in the border areas were also assimilated as members of the other three varṇas and untouchables. As the result of the continuous expansion of its borders, the society made up of the four varṇas (five including the untouchables) led by the brāhmaṇas spread to almost every part of the subcontinent.

2. Brāhmaṇa Ideals and Reality

A. The Four Stages of Life

The ideal life cycle for any orthodox brāhmaṇa in ancient India consisted of four stages: a student phase (*brahmacarya*), a householder phase (*gṛhastha*), a forest hermit phase (*vānaprastha*), and an ascetic/mendicant phase (*saṃnyāsa, parivrajyā*). That is to say, after studying the Veda under his teacher, a brāhmaṇa then married the daughter of a brāhmaṇa, succeeded his father, worshipped the gods and his ancestors and lived a pure life in accordance with Vedic law. Upon growing old, he then put his son in charge of the household and went into hiding in the forest; after the forest life he turned to wandering and asceticism in search of the fulfillment of his life.

In the *Ṛg-Veda*, the oldest work of Indo-Aryans authorship (compiled c.1100-1000 BC), there are descriptions of students learning the Veda from their teachers and of saints (*muni*) who led lives of asceticism and meditation. While the origins of the four stages probably date back to the life depicted in such scenes, those various lifestyles still had not been put within the context of particular stages of life (*āśrama*). Also in the *Brāhmaṇas* and *Upaniṣads* compiled during the Later Vedic Age, while there are vague references to *āśramas*, the conceptualization of four stages had still not been formulated. It is only in the *Dharmasūtras* that we find substantial discourse on *āśramas*, but some room for individual choice was still recognized. That is to say, while the first stage was indispensable, after the stage one could not only enter the second, but could also remain in the first stage or even choose to skip to the third or fourth. Also, it was possible to enter either the third or fourth stage after completing the second. These choices continued to be acceptable among some Vedic scholars even after the *Manu-smṛti's* "four succeeding stages theory" became the norm. There was also a third interpretation which took the householder phase as the only genuine *āśrama*, considering the student phase as preliminary, and the third and fourth stages as supplementary.

According to the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* (II, 9, 16, 4-5), those born into the brāhmaṇa varṇa assume the following three debts (*ṛṇa*).

> From his birth a brāhmaṇa is burdened with three debts...If he worshipped the sages (*ṛṣi*) through study [of the Veda], Indra through the Soma sacrifice, and manes of his ancestors through [having] children, he will be relieved from his debts and be able to enjoy life in heaven.

After completing his schooling, the first stage of life, and thus paying his part of debt to the sages, a *dvija* was then allowed by his teacher to return home; he then married,[6] and had sons. Also after his father retires or dies, he inherits the family household and took on religious and social responsibilities as the head of his family. This is the second stage of life, during which remaining debts were paid. He also pursued the three purposes in life, the *dharma* (holy duty), *artha* (material gain) and *kāma* (sexual desire), during this householder stage. The importance of this stage is described in the *Vāsiṣtha Dhs.* (VIII, 14-16) as follows.

> Only householders offer sacrifice, and they perform austerities. This is why the householder stage is the most important of the four. In the same way that both large and small rivers find peace and security in the sea, those in all of the

[6] Traditionally Hindu law divides the institution of marriage into eight types. For example in the *Baudhāyana Dhs.* (I, 11, 20, 1-9) we find:
(1) *Brāhma*: Father giving his daughter to a young man of an upstanding family, whose learning and virtue are unquestioned. (2) *Prājāpatya*: Father giving his dressed up daughter, telling the couple, "fulfil the *dharma* as husband and wife." (3) *Ārṣa*: Father giving his daughter in marriage in exchange for a couple of cows. This is a ceremonial exchange unrelated to bride-price. (4) *Daiva*: Father giving his daughter with gifts to the priest (*ṛtvij*) at the place where ritual is performed. (5) *Gāndharva*: Marriage between lovers. (6) *Āsura*: Marriage in which the bridegroom pays for the bride. (7) *Rākṣasa*: Marriage after forcibly abducted a maiden. (8) *Paiśāca*: Marriage after secretly abducting a maiden while sleeping, inebriated, or mentally deranged.

According to the *Baudhāyana Dhs.* (I, 11, 20, 10-16), among these eight types of marriage, brāhmaṇas are allowed to employ (1)-(4), each preceding one being more desirable. All four involve a father giving his daughter away. Giving one's daughter away in exchange for money or other gifts was not acceptable. From (5) on down, the types grow more and more sinful; however, (6) and (7) were acceptable among kṣatriyas, (5) among vaiśyas and (8) among śūdras. Some say that (5) was also acceptable among all the varṇas.

stages depend on those in the householder stage. In the same way as all living beings live under protection of their mothers, all mendicants (*bhikṣu*; those in the fourth stage) survive depending on those in the householder stage.

In contrast to the rather vague explanations of the *Dharmasūtras*, the later *Manu-smṛti* (VI, 1, 35-37) in principle forbade those *dvijas* who had not fulfilled their householder responsibilities from entering the next two stages of life.

Although there had been the tradition of ascetic life early in the Vedic Age, orthodox brāhmaṇas were essentially ritualists who were critical of the religious practice of renouncing the world, especially that of their younger generations. However, during the era of the *Dharmasūtras*, which overlaps the birth of Buddhism, the support for the practice spread even among brāhmaṇas. It was a phenomenon that the orthodox school could not ignore, resulting in renunciation being incorporated into their life cycle as the third and fourth stages. Here we find another example of the characteristic way in which brāhmaṇas were capable of flexibly adjusting to reality.

B. Inter-Varṇa Miscegenation

The varṇa system is maintained by the members of each varṇa marrying endogamously within their own varṇas. Although marriage between varṇas is forbidden, in practice we often see it, resulting in a large amount of children of mixed varṇa blood being born. Failing to pay heed to such a practice would of course result in the collapse of the system from the crumbling of its very foundations. In order to deal with such reality, there is the idea of "*anuloma*" (lit. "with [the nap of] the hair," i.e. in accordance with the natural order). This idea was first espoused by the *Dharmasūtras* and later adopted by all the *Dharmaśāstras*, beginning with the *Manu-smṛti*. Here is what the *Baudhāyana Dhs.* (I, 8, 16, 2-5) says.

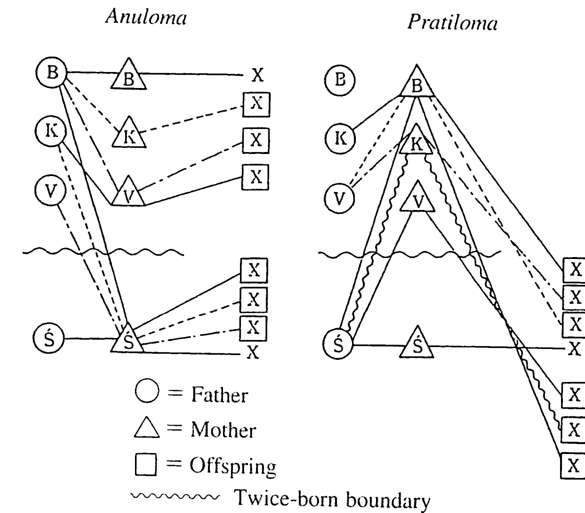
> [All men of each varṇa can] take wives according to the varṇa order. [That is too say,] a brāhmaṇa [can take wives] from four varṇas, a kṣatriya from three varṇas, a vaiśya from two varṇas, a śūdra from one.

In sum, the inter-class marriage which can usally be seen in any stratified society (husbands from higher class than wives) is permitted. This type of marriage is called *anuloma*. Marriage involving a woman of higher class than her husband constitutes "*pratiloma*" ("against [the nap of] the hair" i.e. not in accordance with the natural order) and is taboo. The worst *pratiloma* combination of a brāhmaṇa wife and śūdra husband would, according to all the works of Hindu law, result in the offspring being relegated to the caṇḍāla untouchabale *jāti*.

The *Baudhāyana Dhs.* (I, 8, 16, 6) goes on to say that sons borne by a wife of the next lower varṇas will belong to the husband's varṇa. That is to say, sons of

brāhmaṇa men and kṣatriya women will be brāhmaṇas, and those of kṣatriya men and vaiśya women will be kṣatriyas; however, sons of vaiśya men and śūdra women are classified as different septs along with the twice removed *anuloma* offspring. The same *Baudhāyana Dhs.* (II, 2, 3, 10), on the other hand, discriminates between uni-varṇa offspring and *anuloma* offspring in the amount of the father's inheritance to which each is entitled, indicating a continuing undercurrent of resistance to *anuloma* marriages among hardcore orthodox brāhmaṇas. Be that as it may, by employing the rationale of *anuloma*, brāhmaṇas made the inter-varṇa marriages that were frequently occurring a semi-legal practice and were thus able to avoid the collapse of the varṇa social framework.

Offspring Resulting from *Anuloma* and *Pratiloma* Marriages



The above diagram shows twelve different possibilities of mulatto offspring resulting from inter-varṇa marriage, some acceptable and others strictly prohibited. And of course there was the possibility that these basic mulatto types could marry into the four varṇas or different mulattoes types, giving rise to secondary and tertiary mixtures with different social position and name. The works of Hindu law do not agree in detail on the origins of these blood lines, indicating that the whole miscegenation theory was concocted by brāhmaṇa legalists in an academic vacuum. Their intention was to use the theory in explaining the origins of the ethnically diverse groups already existing in society and their social and ritual positions. The *Manu-smṛti* (X, 6-56) lists about thirty mixed bloodlines and their occupations, many of

which were despised by twice-born kinship groups.[7]

A brāhmaṇa in his householder stage earns a livelihood through income and wealth given him by others. That is to say, in principle he should earn his living by the three means of officiating at ceremonies (*yājana*), teaching the Veda (*adhyāpana*) and receiving alms (*pratigraha*). In each of these means there are many complicated rules that have to be observed in order to assure that the purity of the brāhmaṇa will not be defiled. These are laid out in detail in the *Dharmasūtras*: for example, in the case of ceremonies and instruction, when, where, and how they are to be conducted; in the case of alms, from whom, when, and where they are to be received. However, in actuality there are only a limited number of brāhmaṇas who are able to live such an ideal householder's life. Here again, brāhmaṇas appear quite flexible in merging ideals with reality. Let us look at some examples in the following sections.

C. Āpaddharma

The most indicative example of such flexibility is probably *āpaddharma*, laws pertaining to times of distress. As already mentioned, the means of livelihood for a brāhmaṇa were performing ceremonies, teaching the Veda and receiving alms. However, concerning the questions "for, to, and from whom?," in principle they were limited to people of the three twice-born varṇas who were leading their lives according to the law. Twice-born people living outside the law, śūdras and untouchables were excluded from these three means of livelihood. Brāhmaṇas had maintained their top position in the social structure because they could monopolize these three means, which were looked upon as the purest and best of all occupations. No other varṇa was allowed to engage in them.

However, the number of brāhmaṇas who were actually capable of supporting their families on just these three means was very limited; so those who could not were forced to perform ceremonies for and teach the Veda to persons of the śūdra varṇa and receive alms from them. Some also had to resort to work done by the lower varṇas. From the orthodox point of view, such behavior was impure and contrary to Vedic law and put the practitioner in danger of losing his brāhmaṇa status. The *Baudhāyana Dhs.* (I, 5, 10, 24) puts it this way.

> Brāhmaṇas [who live as] herders, merchants, craftsmen, actors, servants, and usurers are to be treated like śūdras.

Now if such a rule had been applied to the letter, there would have been many brāhmaṇas stripped of their varṇa status. In order to resolve such a contradiction

[7] See Table II of pp. 216-17 of this volume.

between ideals and reality, a set of rules were created to be applied in cases of distress (*āpad*). These provisionary rules can be divided into two categories. The first pertains to the three ideal means of livelihood, relaxing the conditions regarding for, to and from whom they could be conducted. That is to say, in times of distress brāhmaṇas would be allowed to receive income from "anybody," regardless of the quality of his life and varṇa status. The *Gautama Dhs.* (VII, 4) states:

> [In times of distress a brāhmaṇa can] offer sacrifices for all, teach [them], and receive [alms from them].

In the *Manu-śmṛti* (X, 101-08) rules concerning *āpad* become more explicit.

From the standpoint of the king and the brāhmaṇa working together to bring about prosperity throughout the kingdom, Hindu law requires the king to provide brāhmaṇas with a means of livelihood. Therefore, in principle, whenever a brāhmaṇa falls into distress, he has the right to seek alms from the king. There is also the rule that allows any brāhmaṇa suffering from starvation to expropriate grain from the stores of any non-brāhmaṇa. Such provisions will be discussed in more detail in Chapter III.

Although the three ideal means of livelihood were provisionally expanded by such rules, the number of brāhmaṇas who were able to raise their families under them was still limited. So in order to deal with this problem, the *Dharmasūtras* provided a second set of rules that enabled brāhmaṇas to take on occupations attributed to lower varṇas during times of distress. The *Gautama Dhs.* (VII, 6-7) states,

> Whenever it is impossible [for a brāhmaṇa to find work in his true calling], [he may earn a living in] kṣatriya occupations, and when that is impossible, vaiśya occupations.

The *Manu-smṛti* (X, 81-82, etc.) and other *Dharmaśāstras* contain the same provisions, urging brāhmaṇas to take on kṣatriya occupations first, then vaiśya occupations in times of distress. However, the vaiśya occupation of usury was still strictly forbidden. The *Vāsiṣṭha Dhs.* (II, 42), after forbidding the practice among brāhmaṇas, emphasizes the gravity of the situation with the words,

> [The absolute one Brahman] when comparing [the crime] of the murder of a brāhmaṇa (or abortion) and the practice of usury on his scale, found that the former rises under the weight of the latter.

But here again, the law makers did not forget to provide loopholes. For example, the *Vāsiṣṭha Dhs.* (II, 43) follows the above prohibition with the provision to permit brāhmaṇas to lend money with interest to those who neglect their religious

duties and are exceedingly wicked. Also, the *Gautama Dhs.* (X, 5-6) permits brāhmaṇas to engage in commerce or usury, provided they do not work themselves.

The works of Hindu law have extremely minute rules regarding the products that brāhmaṇas who go into commerce must not handle. Such taboo products may be divided into four categories: 1) things the sale of which is prohibited, 2) things the sale of which has definite conditions attached, 3) products that can only be bartered, and 4) products that cannot even be bartered. Hindu law also goes as far as to provide means of atonement to purify those brāhmaṇas who have dealt in such products. By performing the prescribed purification rituals, offenders were able to rejoin the ranks of their fellow brāhmaṇas.

The compilers of Hindu law have various opinions regarding whether or not brāhmaṇas should engage in agriculture. Concerning this problem, we find views that permit them to do farm work as long as cultivation does not interfere with the study of the Veda. We also find views that recognize land ownership and management for brāhmaṇas.

The question of whether brāhmaṇas could engage in śūdra varṇa occupations—i.e. servile tasks—in times of distress was indeed vexing for Hindu legalists. For example, after recognizing brāhmaṇa involvement in commerce and agriculture, the *Manu-smṛti* (IV, 4-6) describes the servile occupations of śūdra as similar to the way dogs live (*śvavṛtti*) and strictly prohibits brāhmaṇas from engaging in them. However, in the section on what to do in times of distress, it lists some śūdra occupations as possible means to adopt. That is to say (X, 116),

> Learning, crafts, wage labor, service, herding, buying and selling, agriculture, contentment [with little], begging for alms, and money lending are acceptable [for every one in times of distress].

Of course, any brāhmaṇa living under *āpaddharma* would have to abandon such a lifestyle as soon as he became able to make a living by any of the occupations related to his own varṇa. On this point, the *Manu-smṛti* (XI, 30) is emphatic, stating,

> Anyone stupid enough to attempt to earn a livelihood by supplementary means despite being able to live by the primary means would never reap the fruits awaiting him in the next life.

The provisions dealing with times of distress, first systematically laid down in the *Dharmasūtras,* were adopted by the later works of Hindu law. These provisionary rules functioned to tie brāhmaṇas earning livelihoods by various means (i.e., brāhmaṇas who had been forced to turn to such means out of practical considerations) to their own varṇa, thus making it possible for that varṇa to survive. Similar rules would be applied to the other three varṇas as well, for there were times when they too were forced to go beyond the legitimate occupational frameworks of their varṇas in order to feed their families. In the above manner, Hindu law made their lives "acceptable" despite not being "ideal." In sum, the *āpaddharma* solved the contradiction between the ideology of the varṇa system and the exigencies of reality and was an effective rationale for preserving the four varṇa order. Here we see again the flexible attitude of brāhmaṇas for the requirements of the real world.

There is another aspect to "times of distress" with respect to the household; that is the lack of a male heir. The *Manu-smṛti* (IX, 58-63) provides for this *āpad* with a provisional rule called *niyoga,* which, in the case of the death or incapacity of the older brother, allows a younger brother or other male kin to have sexual intercourse with the childless wife "solely for the purpose of bearing one or two sons."

D. *Prāyaścitta*

It goes without saying that brāhmaṇas, who laid claim to the highest and purest position in the varṇa hierarchy, had to back that claim up with the way they lived their lives. That is why the brāhmaṇa's everyday life is filled with much stricter sanctions and rules than the members of any other varṇa. In other words, brāhmaṇas were required to be well-versed in the Veda and to perform as many as forty rites of passage along with other ceremonies. An uneducated brāhmaṇa was "the equivalent of a śūdra," "a brāhmaṇa in name only." They were also strictly ordered to preserve their purity by not ingesting ritually unclean food or drink or coming into contact with ritually impure people or objects.

However, in everyday life it was practically impossible to avoid unclean things and impure behavior. That is to say, 1) unavoidable impurity arising from such bodily functions as birth, death and defecation, 2) contact with unclean things, or behavior out of line with the practices of one's peers, and 3) even criminal behavior was evaluated in terms of clean-unclean apart from penal considerations. For a brāhmaṇa the danger of pollution was far higher than any of the other varṇas. The practice of expiation (*prāyaścitta*) made it possible to lift individuals and groups who could not avoid falling into impurity under such everyday circumstances up into the framework of the brāhmaṇa varṇa, and at the same time to protect the purity of that framework itself.

The works of Hindu law tell us that purification extended over the whole gamut of everyday life from the most grievous crime of killing a brāhmaṇa to petting a dog, from having sexual relations with a śūdra woman to urination. Purification rites also ranged widely and included ascetic practices, muttering prayers, sacrifice, fasting, ingesting cleansing food or drink, sipping water, bathing, holding one's breathe, almsgiving, etc. Moreover, brāhmaṇas were urged to always carry a water-pot and live in settlements with good water supplies in order to be able to purify themselves at a moment's notice. There was also the possibility that

one could become polluted without even being aware of it, and Hindu law was, as one would expect, equipped to handle such a predicament. According to the *Manusmṛti* (V, 21),

> Once every year, a brāhmaṇa is to perform *kṛcchra* penance, the purification ritual for unknowingly partaking [of prohibited food]. However, for knowingly partaking, specially prescribed [penances are required for expiation].

Anyone who has read Hindu law has no doubt been overwhelmed by all the varied and complex rules concerning expiation. Such a body of rules seems to have been one of the important factors in preserving the status of brāhmaṇas for over three thousand years. In the case of the most egregious infraction imaginable, the killing of a brāhmaṇa (*brahmahatyā*), the following types of expiation sought from the perpetrator, both capital and lenient alike, can be found in Hindu law.

(1) Paying with one's own life.
(2) Risking one's life to save a brāhmaṇa or a cow.
(3) A long term of ascetic practices.
(4) A short term magical expiation.
(5) Performing a special ritual and bathing afterwards.
(6) Acquisition of holy knowledge.
(7) Donating all of one's wealth to brāhmaṇas versed in the Veda.

Other capital crimes (*mahāpātaka*), consisted of adultery with the wife of a brāhmaṇa teacher, drinking *surā* liquor, and stealing a brāhmaṇa's gold, all had the same diverse and rather vague methods of expiation attached. Expiation for lesser crimes was no different in this respect. As in the case of the *āpaddharma* discussed in the previous section, *prāyaścitta* is another example in Hindu law of adding to provisions pertaining to the ideals of brahmanism (provisions that were either difficult or impossible to follow in real life) another set of common sense provisions to compromise with the needs of everyday life, thus enabling brāhmaṇas to solve, rather ingeniously, contradictions that arose in their lives between their ideals and reality.

Heavy offenders were excommunicated from their peers out of fear that the offender's existence would defile the purity of the whole group. The *Baudhāyana Dhs.* (II, 1, 1, 36) provides for ceremonies both on the occasion of excommunication and reinstatement after expiation (purification) in the following manner.

> The kin (*jñāti*) of the offender are to gather together and empty (overturn) his water-pot. Then he will confess, "I did it." After [the expiation of the excommunicant] is performed, brāhmaṇas will ask [him] who has touched water, milk, ghee, honey and salt, "Have you completed [expiation]?" He will reply "Oṃ (yes)." They should then give him who has completed the expiation the right to participate in sacrifices on an equal basis.

When an offender was excommunicated for life, his kinfolk would perform a funeral ceremony formally for him. In other words, since the due expiation could not be performed during the life of the offender, he can only be purified, if possible, after death.

Of course, there were also acts of expiation for the other three varṇas, since they too were at risk of lowering the purity of their varṇas by their everyday behavior and circumstances. Thus expiation functioned to tie everyone to his respective varṇa, not just brāhmaṇas. In other words, through *prāyaścitta* the preservation of the varṇa system itself was ensured. In order for expiation to function properly, the flexibility to respond to every situation was necessary, which was provided by both the diversity and ambiguity characterizing the practice, as best exemplified by the *prāyaścitta* rules for the killing of a brāhmaṇa. We have already observed similar ambiguity in the discussion of *āpaddharma* in the previous section.

3. Changes in the Brāhmaṇa Varṇa

A. Brāhmaṇas and Śūdras

The flexible response to reality displayed by brāhmaṇas can also be observed in their attitude towards śūdras. As previously mentioned, at the time the varṇa system was first formed, the śūdra varṇa was made up of mainly indigenous non-Aryan (not twice-born) people put under Aryans and was required to serve them. As ritually unclean, śūdras had been completely excluded from the Vedic religion (Brahmanism). Here is what the *Gautama Dhs.* (XII, 4-6) says about this.

> Any śūdra who intentionally listens to the recitation of the Veda is to have his ears filled with [molten] tin or lac. [Any śūdra] who recites the Veda is to have his tongue cut out. [Any śūdra] who memorizes the Veda is to be cut in two.

And the *Vāsiṣṭha Dhs.* (XVIII, 15) says,

> Anyone who teaches [a śūdra] the *dharma* and orders him to do *vrata* will sink into the ghasty hell called Asaṃvṛta along with [that śūdra].

However, in reality there were brāhmaṇas who had been forced to earn livelihoods performing ceremonies for śūdras, as mentioned previously under the principle of *āpaddharma*.

Furthermore, under their code of purity, brāhmaṇas were forbidden from receiving food from śūdras. However, for many brāhmaṇas it was practically impossible to avoid such food completely. Here as well, the characteristic feature of Hindu law came into play once more; laying down rules in principle, then providing loopholes in accordance with reality. We not only see various purification rites being devised for persons who partook of impure food, but also such convenient provisions as "food prepared by śūdras under the supervision of an Aryan may be consumed" and "food prepared by servants, barbers and the like among śūdras may be consumed." And of course, any brāhmaṇa who found himself in distress could receive food from any śūdra, as we have already seen. The compilers of the works of Hindu law argued that even though there are rules that contradict one another, since they were determined by the ancient sages, both are correct and should be strictly followed.

As time went on, the lines that divided vaiśyas and śūdras grew more and more vague, until the peasantry became looked upon as being of śūdra origins. By the seventh century AD, when the Chinese monk Hsüan-chuang traveled through India, the vaiśya has become the varṇa of merchants, with śūdras occupying the ranks of cultivators and craftspeople. It was still a period during which the authority of the *Manu-smṛti* and all of its successors remained intact, and if their rules were strictly observed, all śūdras would have had to be completely excluded from all Vedic rituals and ceremonies. However, it was also a time when a good portion of brāhmaṇas were making their living in rural villages. Forced to deal with that reality, brāhmaṇas began to turn their attention to the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyana* and the *Purāṇas* (ancient legends), which had become sacred books of Hinduism by that time. Brāhmaṇas began explaining that these were works that could be opened even to śūdras, and they composed *mantras* based on these new scriptures, which they chanted at the ceremonies they performed for śūdras. In other words, in exchange for making religious compromises, these brāhmaṇas secured a way in which they could earn a stable living. With the passing of time, most of the discrimination that had been first leveled against śūdras were gradually transferred to and absorbed by the untouchable class.

B. The Formation of Hinduism

The Vedic religion that was formed by brāhmaṇas was built upon ritualism. Brāhmaṇa priests would set up altars, light ceremonial fires, sing hymns to gods that were deifications of the nature and make such offerings to them as the flesh of sacrificial animals, ghee, grain, etc. On the other hand, the indigenous people conquered by the Aryans possessed more grass-root beliefs, worshipping mother-goddesses, the reproductive organs, snake and tree gods, etc. And of course brāhmaṇas, who boasted that they were the true transmitters of pure Aryan blood and Aryan heritage, ridiculed and denounced such beliefs.

As India entered the Post-Vedic Age, unorthodox religions like Buddism and Jainism appeared in the middle and lower regions of the Ganga basin, gaining the support of ruling families and newly-rising merchants, and overwhelmed their orthodox counterparts. Even when this trend reached its apex during the Mauryan period (c.320-180 BC), brāhmaṇas had by no means lost their religious authority, though it is true that their religious influence had been significantly weakened. After the fall of the Mauryan Empire, which resulted in an era of political disunion, the orthodox faction began to make a comeback by gaining the support of various ruling families beginning with the Śuṅga Dynasty (c.180-68 BC). However, at the same time northwestern India was being infiltrated by foreign peoples, who frequently brought Ganga-Yamna Doab, the home of the orthodox brāhmaṇas, under their control. In order to deal with such crises, brāhmaṇas chose to regain their former authority by appealing to the masses in the form of a synthesis between the Vedic gods and the many diverse deities worshipped by non-Aryan peoples. While such a trend was noticeable before that time, it sped up considerably after the Mauryan Period.

For example, the god Viṣṇu in the Vedic religion, who had been merely one of the Sun deities now came to integrate the gods popular among the masses and occupy the highest position in the parthenon. That is to say, many major indigenous deities worshipped on the local level were either identified with Viṣṇu himself or believed to be incarnations (*avatāra*) of Viṣṇu. On the other hand, Śiva, a deity thought to have been worshipped at the time of the Indus Civilization, was incorporated into the orthodox brāhmaṇa parthenon through an identification with the Vedic storm god, Rudra. Through the Śiva cult, many diverse non-Aryan elements were injected into orthodox brāhmaṇa doctrine, such as forms of asceticism, worship of the Lord of Beasts (*Paśupati*), and rites related to phallic symbols (*liṅga*) and sexual potency (*śakti*). Not only indigenous beliefs surrounding snakes and tree gods, but also various mass forms of belief were incorporated and popularized: iconolatry, temple attendance, pilgrimages, and devotional worship (*bhakti*), etc. The traditional sacrificial ritual (*yajña*) that dominated the Vedic religion continued among orthodox brāhmaṇas, but decreased in importance within the whole liturgy of this syncretic religion called "Hinduism."

The acceptance of abstinence from killing (*ahiṃsā*) as one of the cardinal virtues of Brahmanism / Hinduism may be explained as an extention of the Vedic idea of the soul, but it also demonstrates the flexible reaction of orthodox brāhmaṇas in combatting such unorthodox doctrines as Buddhism and Jainism, which were gaining in popularity due to their criticism of Vedic sacrifices using animal victims. In sum, what happened was that by transforming themselves and their religion, the members of the brāhmaṇa varṇa were able to fend off the unorthodox challenge and conserve both their social position and the privileges that came with it.

Conclusion

The brāhmaṇa varṇa embraces members ranging from an elite priding itself in possessing the highest level of purity to those who through various livelihoods come into contact with the lower classes on a daily basis. Despite such mixed coalescence, each individual brāhmaṇa possesses a strong identity regarding his varṇa, thus forming the class that occupies the highest position in the stratified order of Hindu society. In schematic form, the brāhmaṇa varṇa can be thought of as possessing a structure with a core characterized by the highest ritual purity and inviolability wrapped in a number of layers that become less and less pure and inviolable as they proceed outward. Existing within the inner core is the Vedic scripture in terms of doctrine, and in terms of everyday life the varṇa's *dharma* as asserted by the hardcore traditionalist school. In other words, located at the core of the brāhmaṇa varṇa was a sub-group considered to be in possession of the highest degree of purity or those who strictly followed the norms set down by traditionalists deeply versed in Vedic scripture. Collisions that occurred with forces outside of the brāhmaṇa varṇa were absorbed by the soft and flexible outer layers, which prevented such collisions from breaking the core. As we have seen in each section of this chapter, it was this flexible structure—that is, the ability of brāhmaṇas to adapt themselves to various circumstances in each period of history—that enabled that varṇa to remain paramount in the social order. The brāhmaṇas who were located in the outer protective layers of the varṇa structure continued to be looked down upon by those nearest the core, but nevertheless played an important role in both the syncretization of orthodox Vedic and non-Aryan beliefs and the assimilation of foreign ethnic groups and tribal people into varṇa society, i.e. the formation of Hinduism and the expansion of Hindu society.[8]

As the final note to this chapter, let us take a look at what has happened to the brāhmaṇa class in modern and contemporary India.

During the period of Muslim rule in India, the position of brāhmaṇas as the exclusive religious and intellectual leaders among the Hindu faithful was more or less unaffected. This is because most of the Muslim rulers were content to govern India from above without disturbing grass-roots of Hindu society. Then during the period of British colonial rule, a time when, in contrast, Indian politics, economy and society went through tremendous change, the traditional brāhmaṇa position began to destabilize. From very early on during the colonial period, brāhmaṇas became the first Indians to learn English and many went to work for the colonial government in its executive, judiciary and educational facets. It was in this form that brāhmaṇas were able to enjoy their traditional privileged position as India's intellectual class. Sociologist M. N. Srinivas has referred to this phenomenon as the westernization of an elite from traditional society. Such activities were criticized by brāhmaṇas with orthodox views, who looked upon the British as ritually unclean barbarians; however, in historical perspective, members of the brāhmaṇa varṇa have been repeating such compromises in the name of "times of distress." The westernization of its members was another expression of the varṇa's flexibility. The bitter unyielding orthodox reaction to what was happening to its members gradually softened with the strengthening of colonial rule and the continuing westernization of everyday life in general, in such forms as railways, electrification, school education, etc.

As the result of modernization efforts during the colonial period, the traditional social and religious authority of the brāhmaṇa varṇa was weakened; and the aristocrats and local leaders who in support of brāhmaṇas strove to maintain the social order were driven from power. On the other hand, those castes who had been oppressively kept in a subordinate position in the old order were given the opportunity to achieve social recognition. We also observe within this social trend, members of lower and middle castes attempting to improve their respective ranks in caste society. Although such attempts can also be seen in past eras, it was only from the late nineteenth century on that such activity took on nationwide proportions involving even the lowest ranking castes. Castes that attempted to raise their rank adopted practices that would be looked upon as higher in purity (for example, vegetarianism, temperance, and prohibitions on widow remarriage) and often claimed to be descendents of brāhmaṇas or kṣatriyas. Srinivas has called this phenomenon "Sanskritization." In additon, in southern India and the Deccan, there arose a move-

[8] In his epoch-making survey of a village in the central part of northern India during the late 1920s, W. H. Wiser mentions something very interesting about brāhmaṇas living there (*The Hindu Jajmani System*, pp. 2-8).
(1) Although brāhmaṇas occupied the top position among the village's 24 castes, within the brāhmaṇa caste itself there were eight vertically ranked sub-castes. (2) Of the 41 brāhmaṇa families residing in the village, the three that performed traditional priestly duties were located first, third and sixth in the sub-caste hierarchy, while the majority were involved in agriculture and the remainder in public service and commerce, etc. (3) The first-ranked brāhmaṇa priest conducted ceremonies for the village's top-ranked brāhmaṇa families and would invite a higher ranking priest from a nearby village to perform his family's ceremonies. (4) The third-ranked brāhmaṇa priest performed ceremonies for the lower-rank brāhmaṇa sub-castes and the village's other high- and middle-ranked castes. (5) The sixth-ranked priest conducted ceremonies for the middle- and lower-ranked castes, including some untouchables.

What this situation leads us to believe is that 1) there were brāhmaṇas engaged in various occupations besides the Hindu priesthood; 2) there were indeed groups closest to the core (top of the sub-caste hierarchy) of the brāhmaṇa varṇa seeking the highest purity, while others formed the outer layers (lower ranks) coming into contact with low caste Hindus on a daily basis; and 3) despite such internal heterogeneity, members of the brāhmaṇa varṇa possessed a very deep varṇa identity and consequently formed one solidified class occupying the top echelon of the village's Hindu social microcosm.

ment denouncing the authority of brāhmaṇas, and activists appeared among the untouchable castes calling for an end to caste discrimination.[9]

Although there are those who look upon the various trends and movements during India's modern and contemporary periods as steps taken towards dismantling the varṇa/caste system, in this author's opinion, these events seem to mark more of a reorganization of the system. That is to say, the flexibility that has characterized the system throughout its entire history—its ability to adapt to new and changing environments—will continue to be displayed. While there is no doubt that the authority and influence bestowed upon the brāhmaṇa varṇa by India's traditional social order have been weakened, the varṇa's core of orthodox brahmanist ideas still receives no small support. Therefore, the questions that arise for us are in what way the system will be reorganized under such circumstances and how will the heretofore flexible, adaptive brāhmaṇa varṇa attempt to overcome the crisis it now faces. These are problems that need to be considered in a time framework of "centuries."

[9] Concerning the anti-caste movement, see G. Yamazaki, *Indian Society and Neo-Buddhism, Life and Thought of B. R. Ambedkar, with Additional Chapter on the Caste-System and Untouchability*, Tokyo, 1979 (in Japanese).

Chapter II
BRĀHMAṆAS AS SEEN IN BUDDHIST SOURCES

A. Brāhmaṇa Teachers and Their Students

As a background to the description of brāhmaṇa pedagogy contained in the works of Buddhism, let us first look at what Hindu law has to say about the subject; that is, the first stage of life.

After passing through initiation (*upanayana*), male members of the first three (twice-born) varṇas enter the stage of student in their lifecycles, during which they study the Veda under a brāhmaṇa master (*ācārya*). In the case of the brāhmaṇa varṇa, initiation ceremonies are held in the spring for male children who have lived eight to sixteen years since their conception (heretofore "years old"). Kṣatriya initiation takes place in the summer for males between eleven and twenty-two years of age, and the vaiśya ceremony is held in the fall for males between the ages of twelve and twenty-four. However, if desired, twice-born boys can be initiated and enter the student stage earlier. During the initiation ceremony, participants are presented with a special girdle (*mekhalā*), an upper garment made from animal skin (*carma-uttarīya*), a cloth (*vāsa, vastra*) and a staff (*daṇḍa*), all of which differ in quality according to one's varṇa.

After the ceremony, the new initiates (*brahmacārin*) go to the homes of their teachers to board and perform such obligations as serving the teacher and his household, living a life of abstinence, learning the Veda, keeping the sacred fire, and practicing daily mendicancy. The duration of the student stage varies among twelve, twenty-four, thirty-six and forty-eight years. The unit of twelve years is the amount of time thought necessary to learn one Veda; therefore, the earliest age at which an ordinary brāhmaṇa could learn all the four Vedas would be theoretically fifty-six. However, possibly out of the realization that such terms of study were unrealistic, we find more ambiguous statements in Hindu law determining the student stage as "until one has learned the Veda." Now since such long periods of time gave students many opportunities to break their vows of abstinence and commit other sins, both grievous and venial, we see here and there acts of expiation designed for them.

Those who have completed their study or have at least completed the amount of time required to study, express their gratitude by presenting gifts to their teachers, then participate in a returning home ceremony (*samāvartana*) accompanied by bathing. They return to their fathers, marry and enter the householder (second) stage of their lifecycles. Those householders who desire further study are allowed to return to their teachers from time to time and resume their student lives, including vows of abstinence. There is also the option of not entering the householder stage

of life, but rather choosing to remain at the teacher's household to study and serve him for the rest of one's life (*naiṣṭhika-brahmacārin*). It is said that anyone who lives such a life of abstinence and service will enjoy all the fruits of the eternal world.

The above-mentioned rules for the student stage of life apply in theory to all three twice-born varṇas. However, practically, they were rules pertaining especially to the orthodox brāhmaṇas, in general not experienced by all the twice-borns. It would be safe to say that the majority of kṣatriya and vaiśya students had almost no real connection to orthodox Vedic education, but got a mere taste of it after their initiation ceremonies. They, and the members of the śūdra varṇa as well, were destined to succeed their fathers in their respective family occupations.

In contrast to the idealist works of Hindu law, Buddhist sources particularly the *Jātaka* genre of tales, contains more or less concrete descriptions based on social reality surrounding brāhmaṇa teachers and their students. The students we find in this literature are by no means limited to brāhmaṇas, but the latter do make up the majority. Let us look at some typical examples.

Concerning the age at which brāhmaṇa males embarked on their student lives, there are such ambiguous references as "after coming of age" (*vayappatto*),[1] while some tales clearly state "after reaching the age of sixteen" (*soḷasavassakāle*).[2] According to the above rules, the age of sixteen was the upper limit for a brāhmaṇa intending to be initiated. According to the *Arthaśāstra*, an ancient Indian treatise on politics, sixteen was the minimum legal age of adulthood.[3] It was therefore only common sense that brāhmaṇa males would have before reaching that age already been initiated and studying with their fathers or with nearby teachers. However, in the Buddhist literature, there is almost no mention of that preliminary phase, so in this section, let us concentrate on the second phase of student life.

It was in the city of Taxila (Takṣaśilā, Takkasilā) that many widely known teachers (*disāpāmokkho ācariya*) resided and many young brāhmaṇas (and kṣatriyas and vaiśyas also) gathered to obtain their knowledge and technical skills. Many of the students were from urban areas, but there were sons of wealthy rural families, as well, who brought their tuition with them to Taxila.[4] It is related that the most well-known masters would normally have about 500 students (*pañcamāṇavakasatāni*) studying under them at one time.[5] The next most popular city for scholars was Benares (Bārāṇasī), where well-known teachers were also frequently surrounded by

[1] *J.* I, pp. 356, 431, 447, 510, etc.
[2] *J.* I, p. 285; IV, pp. 7, 237.
[3] *Arth.* III, 3, 1. According to the *Manu-smṛti* (II, 65), the hair clipping ceremony (*keśānta*), symbolizing passage into young adulthood, was performed among brāhmaṇas at age sixteen, kṣatriyas at age twenty-two and vaiśyas at age twenty-four.
[4] *J.* II, pp. 52-53, 68, 394; IV, p. 50.
[5] *J.* I, pp. 317, 402; IV, p. 50, etc.

"500 students."[6] Many of the teachers active in Benares had originally studied in Taxila.[7]

It seems that brāhmaṇa teachers residing in cities would select a quiet place either in one corner of the city or on its outskirts for their schools; but there were others who taught their students in huts built deep in the forest.[8] There is also an account of a brāhmaṇa teacher living in a Himalayan forest together with a large number of students.[9]

Young men who flocked to these teachers would upon arrival introduce themselves, present monetary gifts of gratitude and ask to be accepted as students. These gifts were called *ācariyabhāga*, meaning "the teacher's share," and normally came to a thousand *kahāpaṇas*.[10] Those who could not pay the tuition in advance would render labor services in lieu. Here is one interesting account of the latter.[11]

> [After the teacher questioned his new pupil about where he was from, his family origins and purpose of study], he asked the young man, "Have you brought your tuition fees with you, or do you wish a *dhamma* apprenticeship (*dhammāntevāsika*)?"... A *dhamma* apprentice works for his teacher during the day and acquires learning in the evening. Those who pay tuition are treated like first born sons in the teacher's home and only concern themselves with learning.

The above citation comes from a story about the schooling of a prince, but it probably pertains to young brāhmaṇas studying away from home as well. There is also an account of a brāhmaṇa who after completing his studies, went out to beg for the wherewithal to pay his teacher.[12] This latter method is the most ideal way of obtaining one's tuition according to Hindu law, while the *Jātakas* cite it as exceptional.

Concerning what was actually studied by young men, there are many abbreviated references to "all forms of learning (*sabbasippāni*)," "the three Vedas and eighteen sciences (*tayo vede aṭṭhārasa vijjaṭṭhānāni/sippāni*)" and "Vedic *mantas* (*mantras*)."[13] As to the actual curriculum that a brāhmaṇa should adhere to, we find,

> A brāhmaṇa should be a scholar of the sacred texts, knowing the *mantas*, having read the three Vedas through, being thoroughly acquainted with [the Vedic]

[6] *J.* I, pp. 299-300, 436; II, p. 421; III, p. 18.
[7] *J.* I, pp. 447, 463, 510; II, pp. 47, 100, 137, etc.
[8] *Apadāna*, I, pp. 155, 166, 179; II, pp. 325, 328, 411.
[9] *J.* III, p. 537.
[10] *J.* I, pp. 273, 285; II, pp. 47, 277-78; V, p. 128.
[11] *J.* II, p. 278.
[12] *J.* IV, p. 224.
[13] *J.* I, pp. 431, 447, 510, etc.: *J.* I, p. 356; II, p. 421: *J.* II, pp. 100, 260.

vocabulary, liturgy, etymology, ancient traditions, phraseology and grammar, and having expertise in popular philosophy and the special marks of a great man.[14]

The term "*sippa*" (Skt. *śilpa*) generally means "technical skills" and "handicrafts," and is used in Hindu law to refer to the "crafts" or "arts" that are a part of śūdra livelihoods. However, in the *Jātakas*, the term is used in its broadest sense, referring not only to learning the Veda, but also to such skills as elephant training,[15] magical spells[16] and martial arts[17]. The cities of Taxila and Benares described in the Buddhist literature were large areas of urban culture where teachers of all kinds of scholarly pursuits and technical know-how had gathered.

Students were required to keep their minds off secular matters and live lives of abstinence. Cited as examples of things that could upset one's diligence for study were in the case of householders "clothing, baubles, male and female slaves, arable fields, residences, cows, water buffaloes, children, wives, etc.;"[18] several of them would also apply to students studying away from home. However, due to the nature of the sources, when comparing the lists contained in the works of Hindu law and the rules for Buddhist monks contained in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, they are far from exhaustive.

Students were also required to perform such tasks for their teachers as collecting firewood, hulling rice, cooking, water carrying and personal attendance.[19] However, there were also students who commuted to their teacher's homes from their own homes or rented lodgings.[20] There is a case of one student from a distant province who came to the city and found a teacher, just to give in to seduction and marry, after which he commuted to the home of his teacher to study and perform various tasks.[21]

We find very little in the sources indicating status discrimination among students along varṇa lines. Any status differences seemed to be more along the lines of years of study and learning ability. The top students (*jeṭṭhānteväsika*) were called teaching assistants (*piṭṭhiācariya*) and not only taught courses for their teachers, but also went in their place to preach at the homes of pious householders and receive

[14] *DN.* I, p. 120. Also, *DN.* I, pp. 88, 114, 130, 138.
[15] Learning the three Vedas and *hatthisutta* (elephant trainer's manual) from a teacher in Taxila. *J.* II, pp. 47-48.
[16] *J.* IV, pp. 456-57.
[17] *J.* I, p. 273; III, p. 219; V, p. 128.
[18] *J.* II, pp. 99-100.
[19] *SN.* I, p. 180; IV, p. 117. *J.* I, pp. 317, 447; IV, p. 201.
[20] *J.* II, p. 261; IV, p. 96.
[21] *J.* I, p. 300.

alms.[22] From among the top level students, husbands for teachers' daughters and successors to retired teachers were occasionally chosen.[23]

We see very little indicating any fixed term of study; however, one Buddhist source does introduce the practice based on the ideals of orthodox Brahmanism of "spending forty-eight years in study and abstinence, then going out to beg to repay one's teacher."[24] After completing their studies, students were allowed by their teachers to return home, marry and take over their family's occupations. There were those who became well-known teachers in their hometowns "with 500 students" or "many young kṣatriya and brāhmaṇa men" gathered around them.[25]

Due to the unorthodox nature of the Buddhist sources, teacher-student relationships described in the *Jātakas* differ from descriptions in the works of Hindu law on many points. First, *upanayana*, which is emphasized by the latter, is almost ignored in the Buddhist sources, and we find that the age of students and terms of study were not being strictly followed as required by Hindu law. As places to study, the city of Taxila beyond the upper reaches of the Ganga where brāhmaṇa culture was most dominate, and the city of Benares, which can be said to be a point of contact between the orthodox and unorthodox factions, were the most popular; a phenomenon that can probably be explained by 1) a sense of rivalry on the part of the unorthodox factions, and 2) the existence of these two cities as the most culturally advanced in India at that time. The curriculum studied was far more diverse than mere Vedic scholarship, and the number of students studying under a single teacher, as many as "500," was surprisingly greater than the "several at the most" image we get from the works of Hindu law. In contrast to the rules of Hindu law implying the existence of status discrimination along the lines of the varṇa system, we observe no such stratification in the Buddhist sources.[26] While Hindu law calls for school terms with frequent ritual breaks and vacations, we find hardly a reference to such a practice in the Buddhist literature. The latter describes tuition fees being paid to teachers in advance, while the former calls for the payment of fees after completion.

P. V. Kane offers the following characteristic features of ancient India's education system based on the works of Hindu law:[27]

(1) High status and prestige bestowed on teachers.

[22] *J.* II, p. 100; V, pp. 457-58: *J.* IV, pp. 50-51: *J.* III, p. 171.
[23] *J.* III, pp. 18-19, 219; VI, p. 347: *J.* V, p. 128.
[24] *AN.* III, pp. 224-29. See also pp. 26-27 of this chapter.
[25] See note 7.
[26] However, there is an example of a caṇḍāla untouchable disguising himself as a brāhmaṇa in order to find a teacher. *J.* IV, pp. 391-92.
[27] P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. II-1, pp. 369-70.

(2) Intimate relationships fostered between teachers and students.
(3) Students living in their teachers' homes like family members.
(4) The oral-aural teaching method without the use of textbooks.
(5) Strict discipline and abstinence.
(6) Inexpensive tuition fees.
(7) Conservative, impractical content due to a concentration on scripture.

The type of education in ancient India described by Buddhist sources is indeed in line with these features in many cases.

B. Brāhmaṇa Lifestyle

The Buddhist sources, beginning with the *Jātakas*, describe rather well the actual lives led by brāhmaṇas. In this section, some typical examples will be introduced.

The brāhmaṇas so depicted are deeply aware of their existence as the purest and highest class in the social hierarchy. One brāhmaṇa who is defiled becomes ashamed of himself, lamenting that he is not fit to be member of his *jāti*, lineage (*gotta*) or family (*kula*);[28] and as we shall see, brāhmaṇas sought the origins of their privileged social position in kinship and pedigree. Genealogy was an important tradition to be transmitted from generation to generation,[29] and spouses were always sought from families of equal pedigree.[30] It goes without saying that marriage to a women of a different varṇa was met with derision. One brāhmaṇa refused to bestow his family name (*kulanāma*) on a child borne by an inferior woman and had the child reared by the mother.[31] Brāhmaṇas were accustomed to ask a stranger his lineage or varṇa,[32] and they addressed one another with the special word of "*bho*."[33]

Gotama Buddha is said to have divided brāhmaṇas into the following five categories.[34]

(1) *Brahmasama* (those equal to Brahman). Those born of parents from pure brāhmaṇa lines of descent, studied the Veda for forty-eight years in lives of abstinence, followed by the customary manner of mendicancy, the alms from which were used to repay their teachers. After this, they renounced the world and upon death would be reborn into Brahmaloka (the world of Brahman).

[28] *J.* II, p. 83.
[29] *Apadāna*, I, p. 260.
[30] *J.* I, p. 475; II, pp. 113-15; III, pp. 93-94, 162, 219, etc.
[31] *J.* IV, p. 298. However, the story goes on to say that the child became an assistant *purohita* (king's priest) to his father. IV, p. 304.
[32] *Suttanipāta*, vv. 455-57. *SN.* I, p. 168.
[33] *Suttanipāta*, v. 620. Also, *Āp.* I, 2, 5, 12. *Vās.* XIII, 44. *Baudh.* I, 2, 3, 27. *Manu*, II, 124.
[34] *AN.* III, pp. 223-30.

(2) *Devasama* (those equal to gods). ... same as (1) ... After paying back their teachers through medicancy as above, took brāhmaṇa wives in accordance with customary law, approached no women of different varṇa or despised people, and came into contact with their wives only for the purpose of bearing children; that is, only during gestation. After the birth of sons, they renounced the world and after death would be born into heaven (*sagga*).
(3) *Mariyāda* (rule-practicing brāhmaṇa). ... same as (1), (2) ... After the birth of sons as in (2), lived their remaining lives as householders in accordance with tradition.
(4) *Sambhinnamariyāda* (non-practicing brāhmaṇa). After paying back their teachers as in (1), acquired wives by means other than allowed by customary law like purchase, approached non-brāhmaṇa or despised women, and came into contact with their wives at any time for the purpose of sexual pleasure and amusement, thus living lives contrary to the traditional rules by which brāhmaṇas were expected to abide.
(5) *Brāhmaṇacaṇḍāla* (caṇḍāla-like brāhmaṇa). Those who repaid their teachers with wealth obtained from means other than mendicancy like agriculture, commerce, herding, military skills, royal service and handicrafts, married like in (4), earned their livelihoods in all kinds of occupations, while at the same time insisting on their purity as brāhmaṇas.

From the above categories, we can see that 1) descent and genealogy were important factors for brāhmaṇas, 2) it was obligatory for them to marry within their own varṇa, 3) that the true purpose of marriage among them was to bear sons, but 4) there were, in fact, diverse lifestyles among them. We find similar factors in the works of Hindu law, as well; however, we do find the householder stage of life, which Hindu law emphasizes as the most important phase of brāhmaṇa life, conspicuously missing from the highest form of existence described above. The "caṇḍāla-like brāhmaṇa" category, which was in actuality quite pervasive, will be discussed later on.

Of the examples concerning the problem of brāhmaṇas struggling to avoid any contact with people and things considered unclean, we find references to encounters with caṇḍālas: for example, the daughter of a brāhmaṇa washing her eyes after gazing upon a caṇḍāla; a young brāhmaṇa fearing that he might find himself standing downwind from a caṇḍāla; another brāhmaṇa youth shamefully hiding himself in the forest after eating food leftover by a caṇḍāla; and a brāhmaṇa fearing that his funeral pyre may be located in the same place as despised people.[35] Those who were so defiled and bereft of their purity were often excommunicated from their peers: for example, a group of brāhmaṇas were stripped of their status as the result of eat-

[35] See pp. 201, 226-29 of this volume. The last example can be found in *J.* II, p. 54.

ing caṇḍāla leftovers; a brāhmaṇa was deprived of his inheritance after drinking liquor.[36] According to one Buddhist passage, an offender could have his head shaved, be covered with ashes from head to foot and sent on his way into banishment, his brāhmaṇa peers refusing to eat or even sit with him, give him water, worship together with him or allow him to marry within the varṇa.[37]

Those brāhmaṇas who resided within their center of culture in the upper reaches of the Ganga basin looked upon its middle and lower reaches, where non-orthodox religions, such as Buddhism had arisen, as regions of disorder and little purity. The Buddhist sources refer to such brāhmaṇas, and their descendants who were living in the latter region, as *udicca-* (northern) and *pacchābhūmaka-* (western country) brāhmaṇas, describing them as stately and proud of their purity.[38] For example, in one source we find a description of what extremes they went to in order to protect their purity.

> Here the *pacchābhūmaka*-brāhmaṇas carry water vessels, make wreaths out of moss grass, attend a fire and do ablutions. They teach their students, "Boys, you are to rise early and touch the earth. If you do not touch the earth, touch wet cow dung. If you do not touch wet cow dung, touch green grass. If you do not touch green grass, attend a fire. If you do not attend a fire, join your hands in prayer to the Sun. If you do not pray to the Sun, bath for the third time [that day] in the early evening."

The Buddha criticized such formalized purification rituals of *pacchābhūmaka*-brāhmaṇas, arguing that true purification (*soceyya*) was realized by purifying one's actions, words and thought according to the ten-fold code of pure behavior; prohibiting the killing of living beings, stealing, lying, etc.[39]

Incidentally, many of those *bhikkhus* of brāhmaṇa origin who became active in the earliest Buddhist order (*saṅgha*) were eastern-born, and looked down upon by the western-born brāhmaṇas.[40]

The relationship between brāhmaṇas and the kings, who were their protectors, will be discussed in Chapter III; however, in terms of numbers, there were far more brāhmaṇas active in the cities and villages performing religious services for local residents in exchange for stipends and alms than those who depended for their livelihoods on the king. Wealthy urban households are depicted feeding many

[36] *J.* IV, p. 388: *J.* V, pp. 466-68.
[37] *DN.* I, p. 98. The "ashes" part comes from Buddhaghosa's annotation.
[38] *J.* I, pp. 361, 436. *AN.* V, p. 263.
[39] *AN.* V, pp. 263-68.
[40] Concerning the western-born puritans and eastern-born "popular/worldly brāhmaṇas," see R. Fick, *The Social Organisation in North-East India in Buddha's Time,* tr. by S. Maitra, 2nd pr., Varanasi, 1972, pp. 212-16.

brāhmaṇas on a daily basis and giving them alms. We find such wealthy families requesting brāhmaṇas to name their sons and hiring them to teach their children.[41] Rich families in rural areas also invited brāhmaṇas to perform ceremonies and give sermons. After preaching and bestowing words of good fortune, these brāhmaṇas would be fed and given tokens of appreciation.[42] The residents of one particular village collectively decided to provide a brāhmaṇa (or someone they thought was a brāhmaṇa) with remuneration and housing in exchange for lessons.[43] There were probably many such brāhmaṇas who decided to settle down in villages to perform ceremonies for the local residents and advise them on daily matters. There were also brāhmaṇas residing in towns and marketplaces (*nigama, nigamagāma*) located between the cities and villages,[44] one case of which describes a wealthy brāhmaṇa family owning property worth "800 million."[45] On the other hand, the poorest of brāhmaṇas made the rounds of villages and towns to receive food and objects of worth.[46] We find one of these mendicants insisting, "No one can refuse a brāhmaṇa begging for food."[47] In the *Jātakas*, there appear many persons making a living partly through fortune telling and magic spells,[48] many of whom can be assumed to have been of brāhmaṇa origin.

However, there were many brāhmaṇas who were not able to earn their living through the three legitimate means of performing ceremonies, teaching the Veda and begging for alms. These were the "caṇḍāla-like brāhmaṇas" described by the Buddha, whose ways of life were recognized under Hindu law as "in distress," as discussed in Chapter I. According to Hindu law, the reason for recognizing these temporary measures was, "since a brāhmaṇa's essential existence is pure, under conditions of distress or emergency, he will not be defiled, no matter what actions he is forced to take." In the Buddhist sources, brāhmaṇas also defend such aberrant behavior with such words as "though the fire burns something pure or impure, it will never be defiled; likewise, no matter what occupation he engages in, a brāhmaṇa will never be defiled."[49]

Such secularized brāhmaṇas appear frequently in the *Jātakas*, particularly those who have turned to agriculture for a living (*kassakabrāhmaṇa*).[50] There are those who own large tracts of arable worked by slaves or hired laborers, and those who

[41] *J.* IV, pp. 378-79.
[42] *J.* I, p. 318; III, p. 171; IV, p. 391.
[43] *J.* I, pp. 239, 296.
[44] *J.* II, p. 232; III, pp. 36, 308.
[45] *J.* III, pp. 93, 497; IV, p. 28.
[46] *J.* IV, p. 96; III, p. 343; VI, p. 521.
[47] *J.* IV, pp. 63-64.
[48] *J.* I, pp. 253, 272, 334-45, 455-58, etc.
[49] *AN.* III, p. 229.
[50] *J.* III, p. 162; V, p. 68. *VP.* IV, pp. 47, 266.

work the land themselves along with their families.[51] In addition, among the brāhmaṇas who became merchants, we find some leading caravans in both inland and maritime trade (*satthavāhabrāhmaṇa*), and others peddling wares carried on their shoulders through villages and towns.[52] There are brāhmaṇas occupied as shepherds, physicians, archers, carpenters, woodworkers, hunters, snake charmers; and there was even one who became a king![53] The next chapter will describe those brāhmaṇas who became ministers, judges and other government officials. One *Jātaka* tale describes that there are brāhmaṇas engaged in as many as ten different types of occupation[54]: physician, servant, heavy-handed tax collector, woodsman, merchant, Ambaṭṭha-vessa,[55] butcher, cowherd-cum-robber, hunter and bath attendant.

It therefore follows that there were great income and wealth differentials among members of the brāhmaṇa class. In addition to the owner of property worth "800 million" previously mentioned, there was another brāhmaṇa who built six alms dispensaries (*dānasālā*)—one at each of his city's four gates, one in the city center, and one in front of his home—to serve the local poor,[56] while on the other hand, we observe a brāhmaṇa who was so far in debt that he was contemplating suicide; a brāhmaṇa and members of his family having to work for others; a former *purohita* family living in squalor, etc.[57] As discussed in detail in the next section, the Buddha looked critically upon brāhmaṇas who, while earning an ordinary living no different from other varṇas, still regarded themselves as socially superior.

C. Assertions of Brāhmaṇas and Their Buddhist Critique

During the Later Vedic Age (c.1000-600 BC), when the brāhmaṇa varṇa was first formed into an exclusive, endogamous class of priests, the ideology of "brāhmaṇa supremacy" was already being proposed. And we find similar claims in the *Dharmasūtras* compiled during the next period. For example, based on the well-known human origins mythology dating back to the *Ṛg Veda*, the *Vāsiṣṭha Dhs.* (IV, 1-2) states that brāhmaṇas, originated from the mouth of the Creator, possess the

[51] *J.* III, p. 293; IV, pp. 276-77: *J.* II, p. 165.
[52] *J.* IV, pp. 15-16; V, pp. 22, 471: *J.* II, p. 15.
[53] *J.* III, p. 401: *J.* II, p. 213: *J.* IV, p. 207: *J.* I, pp. 356-59; V, pp. 127-31: *SN.* I, p. 179: *J.* II, p. 200; III, p. 467; VI, p. 170: *J.* IV, p. 457; *J.* VI, pp. 185-86: *J.* I, p. 326.
[54] *J.* IV, pp. 361-65.
[55] The tale explains that they engaged in agriculture and commerce, raised goats and sheep, sold their daughters, sent them into marriage and sometimes obtained their wives by buying them.
[56] See note 45 and *J.* III, p. 428: *J.* IV, p. 15.
[57] *J.* VI, p. 178: *J.* I, p. 475: *J.* II, p. 427.

highest form of purity and should occupy the highest position in the ritual hierarchy. Therefore, the words uttered by brāhmaṇas were believed to have the power to purify defilement. For example, the defilement caused by talking to a ritually unclean person can be purified by conversing with a brāhmaṇa, and it is sometimes necessary for purification ceremonies to be acknowledged with words uttered from the lips of brāhmaṇas.[58] According to the *Āpastamba Dhs.* (I, 3, 9, 13), whenever it is necessary for anyone about to study the Veda to speak with a menstruating woman, he should first converse with a brāhmaṇa before speaking to the woman, then converse again with the brāhmaṇa afterwards, before beginning his studies.

Brāhmaṇas depended heavily on alms and services received from others for their livelihood. The *Dharmasūtras* repeat over and over how much merit is derived from such gestures towards brāhmaṇas, thus promoting frequent almsgiving not only at ceremonies, but also in everyday life. It is also said that almsgiving will result in good fortune both in the present and next world, like absolution for sins committed in the past and attainment of heaven after death.[59] The *Vāsiṣṭha Dhs.* (XXX, 6) has one rule that compares the mouth of a brāhmaṇa to a flame burning with the fire of the Veda, thus any offerings partaken by that mouth (alms given to a brāhmaṇa) will protect and save both the almsgiver and receiver from sin.

Despite the *Dharmasūtras* singing the praises of brāhmaṇa superiority in such a way, it does not follow that the other varṇas must honor all brāhmaṇas unconditionally. For example, such statements as "Any twice-born person who does not perform twilight devotions at the right times each day, at the break of dawn and sunset, does not deserve to be called a brāhmaṇa" and "Not studying the Veda or teaching it and not keeping the sacred fire lit make a brāhmaṇa no different from a śūdra"[60] show that Hindu law would not recognize brāhmaṇas who either failed to perform their religious duties or were ignorant of the Veda as legitimate members of their varṇa. Also, those brāhmaṇas who lived their lives merely on the strength of their heritage were ridiculed as "*jātimātropajīvin*" (subsisting only by his birth) or "*nāmadhāraka*" (keeping his name only).[61] Furthermore, such brāhmaṇas were seen as unworthy to receive alms, and the alms they did manage to receive were considered meaningless, even detrimental, to both parties in the exchange.[62]

The *Manu-smṛti*, which is an expanded compilation of the provisions contained in the *Dharmasūtras*, is fundamentally consistent with them, but tends to represent a more developed stage of Hindu law and clearly contains a more extreme version of the idea of brāhmaṇa supremacy. In its first chapter, after explaining the origins

[58] *Āp.* II, 1, 2, 8-9. *Gaut.* IX, 16-18. *Vās.* XIV, 23-24. *Baudh.* I, 5, 9, 9.
[59] For example, *Vās.* XXVIII-XXX.
[60] *Baudh.* II, 4, 7, 15. *Vās.* III, 1.
[61] *Baudh.* I, 1, 1, 10 & 16. *Vās.* III, 5, 11.
[62] *Vās.* III, 4, 8-10; VI, 32; XXVIII, 17.

of the four varṇas and their main responsibilities, the *Manu-smṛti* offers ten verses emphasizing the purity, superiority and absolute legitimacy of the brāhmaṇa varṇa. Here are a few examples.

> The brāhmaṇa was born from the mouth [of Brahman, the Creator], he was the first-born and he is the preserver of the Veda, and as such, is by right the lord (*prabhu*) over all creation... Through his mouth, the gods always partake of offerings (*havya*) and the spirits of ancestors partake of offerings to the dead (*kavya*). Is there any living being that can surpass him?... The brāhmaṇa is born as the highest on earth, is the lord (*īśvara*) over all living beings, for the purpose of guarding the treasure house of the *dharma*. All things that exist in this world are the possessions of the brāhmaṇa. Due to their superior origins, brāhmaṇas without a doubt possess sovereignty over all [of creation] (I, 93, 95, 99-100).

Nor does the *Manu-smṛti* stop there. It goes on to attribute to brāhmaṇas even divine supremacy.

> A brāhmaṇa, regardless of ignorance or wisdom, is a great divinity (*daivataṃ mahat*), just as the fire, whether carried [to the altar] or not, is a great divinity... Therefore, brāhmaṇas are to be respected in all ways, regardless of their being employed in all sorts of mean occupations. That is because of their supreme divinity (*paramaṃ daivatam*) (IX, 317, 319).
> It is said that the brāhmaṇa is the creator of the world (*vidhātṛ*), the disciplinarian (*śāsitṛ*), the teacher (*vaktṛ*) and the comforter (*maitra*). Words of ill omen or ill manner should never be uttered towards him... By virtue of his birth alone, a brāhmaṇa is a deity even for gods (*devānām api daivatam*). His teaching is authoritative for men. This is because the Veda forms its foundation (XI, 35, 85).

Along with such directives emphasizing the divinity and inviolability of brāhmaṇas, items frequently appear calling for the deprivation of their status due to improper behavior. It is also said that any brāhmaṇa who does not live up to his name will upon his death be plunged into the depths of hell (IV, 190-97).

Therefore, in the works of Hindu law we find provisions seeking respect for the brāhmaṇa varṇa as a whole due to its sacred and pure character together with other provisions that such respect be directed only at its learned and virtuous members. However, the compilers of these works did not consider the two to be contradictory, and dealt with both as sacred law. Such ambiguity would trouble scriptural annotators in later eras, but this aspect also lent a great deal of flexibility in interpreting Hindu law, which, as we have seen, was necessary for preserving the varṇa

system and brāhmaṇa supremacy within it throughout Indian history.

In the Buddhist literature as well, we find brāhmaṇas making claims about themselves similar to those that appear in the works of Hindu law. Of course, most of them become the subject of censure by the Buddha and the compilers of his words, but let us look first at what claims were actually made by brāhmaṇas, then consider their Buddhist critique.

To begin with, one brāhmaṇa claims that a true member of his varṇa must satisfy five conditions.[63]

(1) There must be no doubt about his birth: his mother and father must be of proper birth, pure blooded with no sign of miscegenation for at least seven generations.
(2) He is a scholar of sacred scripture (*ajjhāyaka*), knowledgeable of the *mantas* (*mantras*), and thoroughly familiar with all three Vedas and other Vedic studies.
(3) He is handsome, presentable, clean, with the best physical features, an air of dignity and authority, never mean nor ignoble.
(4) He possesses moral discipline (*sīla*) and superior moral deportment; his moral training is complete.
(5) He has an excellent grasp of all scholarly knowledge, he is wise, and is ranked first or second among those who carry the sacrificial laddle (*sujā*).

Here are some other definitions offered by brāhmaṇas themselves.

(1) The brāhmaṇa is the highest varṇa, all others being inferior to it. Only brāhmaṇas have white skin, all others having dark complexions. Only brāhmaṇas are pure, all others being otherwise. Brāhmaṇas are the sons of Brahman, born from his mouth. Born from Brahman, created from Brahman, Brahman's legitimate heirs.[64]
(2) Brāhmaṇas are the children of Brahman... They are superior to anyone and possess great authority... They also possess great virtue. Those who give alms to brāhmaṇas with sincerity, will definitely be reborn into the world of the gods, nowhere else... Therefore, brāhmaṇas are the best recipients (*aggadakkhiṇeyya*) among those to be provided for.[65]
(3) Brāhmaṇas study the Veda, make offerings, celebrate the fire. It is for these

[63] *DN*. I, p. 120. Also, *DN*. I, pp. 113-14, 130, 138. *MN*. II, pp. 165-66.
[64] *DN*. III, p. 81. *MN*. II, pp. 84, 148.
[65] *J*. VI, pp. 200-02.

three reasons that one must never kill a brāhmaṇa.[66]

(4) Brāhmaṇas are determined to follow the five *dhammas* (*dharmas*) for earning religious merit and doing good... Truth (*sacca*)... Asceticism (*tapo*)... Pure Deeds (*brahmacariya*)... Study (*ajjhena*)... Relinquishment (*cāga*).[67]

All of these claims more or less correspond to the works of Hindu law, while the focus tends to be on pedigree, monopoly over ritual, and superior intelligence and knowledge, the exact three points to which the Buddhist critique of brāhmaṇas' assertions was directed.

Turning to that critique, to begin with, regarding the claim that superiority and purity were based on birth, the Buddha retorts,

> Even those born into brāhmaṇa households, but who have done evil will be censured in the present world and suffer an adverse rebirth in the next. What is important is not one's birth, but rather individual behavior. People are not born inferiors or brāhmaṇas, they become inferiors or brāhmaṇas as the result of their deeds. Becoming a warrior, cultivator, craftsman, merchant or slave is the result of one's behavior.[68]

He is said to have inserted a bit of irony, stating, "Even a brāhmaṇa flatters a wealthy śūdra and tries to win his favor."[69]

Although there were in fact those of both exemplary and disgraceful character among brāhmaṇas, many of their varṇa grew arrogant about their birthright and formed groups characterized by cliquishness and exclusivity. For the Buddha, brāhmaṇas by birth "are not true brāhmaṇas, but rather a group of people who have the audacity to call each other '*bho*' (*bhovādika*)."[70] Moreover, "A person of purity is one who abandons his personal desires and tries his hardest to follow the right path. The ultimate purity can be achieved by anyone, even those born as śūdras or caṇḍālas."[71] Also, "As to the results of doing right and wrong, there is no difference in the retribution meted out to humans in this world and the next (corporal punishment, damnation, salvation, etc) between brāhmaṇas and those of other varṇas."[72] And, "Although there may be various differences in form among animals or plants, all humans have similar physical features. Brāhmaṇas are no exception, possessing

[66] *J.* IV, p. 302.
[67] *MN.* II, p. 199.
[68] *Suttanipāta*, vv.140-42, 648-56.
[69] *MN.* II, p. 85.
[70] *Suttanipāta*, v.620. *Dhammapada*, v.396. *Mahāniddesa*, p. 249.
[71] *SN.* I, p. 166. *J.* IV, pp. 302-04.
[72] *MN.* II, pp. 83-90.

no distinctive physical characteristics. The only things that are different are the work that people engage in and the various names they are known by."[73]

Buddhist scripture does not recognize the human origin mythology contained in the Veda — that the four varṇas were created from various parts of the Creator's body — implying that at the moment of Creation, humans were thus relegated to four separate classes. It argues instead that the four varṇas derived from specific human behavior. According to the *Aggañña-suttanta*, in antiquity human society was egalitarian, but greed took over and threw society into chaos, resulting in people with political power working for preserving the social order (kṣatriya), those who renounced the vulgar society to live a life of asceticism (brāhmaṇa), those who married and settled down in various occupations (vaiśya), and those who became engaged in hunting and various forms of service (śūdra).[74] Of these four varṇas, the brāhmaṇas were also called "*jhāyin*" (meditators) and "*ajjhāyaka*" (scholars), the origins of which are described as follows.[75]

> The term "brāhmaṇa" has the meaning "one who avoids evil and wrong doing" (*pāpke akusale dhamme bāhenti*). Brāhmaṇas used to live in the forest, in huts made from leaves. Other than in the morning and evening when they would go into town to seek food, they spent their time in their huts in deep meditation. This is why they were called "*jhāyin*." Later, there were those who could not endure such a life and decided to move to residences on the outskirts of villages or towns to compile scripture (*gantha*). Because they no longer meditated (*na jhāyanti*), they came to be known disrespectfully as "*ajjhāyaka*." Today, learned brāhmaṇas are regarded as the highest (*seṭṭha*); however, in antiquity they were looked upon as despicable (*hīnasammata*).

The Buddhist literature criticizes the whole varṇa system, held as absolute by brāhmaṇas, in the following manner.[76]

> According to the accounts given by brāhmaṇas, the absolute being Brahman created the system; but in reality, the varṇa system is not strictly followed. There are brāhmaṇas who carry weapons... etc. Despite the fact that society is in chaos and filled with unhappiness, Brahman has done nothing about it, which means that their absolute god created injustice and lawlessness. This is a contradiction which proves the unreasonable nature of the varṇa system.

[73] *Suttanipāta*, vv.600-19, 648-52.
[74] *DN.* III, pp. 80-98.
[75] *DN.* III, pp. 93-94.
[76] *J.* VI, pp. 207-08.

Turning to the second brāhmaṇa claim, their monopoly over ritual, we find both sardonic and sharp-pointed criticism among Buddhists over worshipping fire and sacrificing animals. Concerning fire worship (*aggijuhana*), one *Jātaka* cites the example of a fire worshipping brāhmaṇa who discovered how meaningless the offerings made to fire were, and has the Buddha say, "In antiquity there were wise men who thought that there was some advantage to be gained from worshipping fire and continued the practice for a long time. However, they eventually discovered that the practice had no value whatsoever, so they doused their fires with water and beat them out with tree branches or whatever was available, never to look upon them again."[77]

The Buddhist sources are, not surprisingly, filled with damning remarks concerning animal sacrifice. Regarding the brāhmaṇa contention that animal sacrifice brought about many good results (*mahapphala*) and therefore should be highly praised, Buddhists rebut that not only is the practice meaningless, but it constitutes an act of cruelty, resulting only in misery as retribution, an act in which both the sacrificer and his victim end up none other than tormented.[78]

The Buddhist rebuttal to Vedic rituals is summed up in one *Jātaka* as "*yaññabhedavāda*" (arguments controverting sacrifice). Here are some examples.[79]

(1) How can fire, that can burn everything and still not be satiated, be managed to satisfy?
(2) Fire has no absolute existence. It starts and continues only in relationship to something else.
(3) If the act of throwing wood or grass on a fire is sacred, then charcoal makers, salt makers, cooks and cremators accumulate the same merit as fire worshippers.
(4) Fire is not divine, since it is capable of tormenting and doing physical damage to us.
(5) It is said that even the Creator, Brahman, worships fire. Why would anyone pray to something he himself created?
(6) If the act of sacrifice really causes happiness for both the sacrificer and the animal sacrificed, why don't brāhmaṇas sacrifice each other?
(7) In spite of the fact that no living being wishes death, brāhmaṇas snatch away the lives of their unwilling sacrificial victims in the interest of their own existence.

With respect to the third brāhmaṇa claim that they are outstanding intellectu-

[77] *J.* I, pp. 493-95; II, pp. 43-45.
[78] For example, *AN.* II, pp. 42-43, 207-08; IV, pp. 41-43. *J.* I, pp. 166-68.
[79] *J.* VI, pp. 205-17.

als, the Buddhists retort with the argument that today brāhmaṇas just repeat over and over the verses and phrases that the ancient sages created.[80] Furthermore, anybody, even a caṇḍāla, can become well-versed in the sacred scripture, beginning with the Veda, without bringing divine wrath down upon him, and even the most erudite brāhmaṇa is capable of doing evil, being censured in this world and being born into an inferior life in the next.[81] One Buddhist source goes on to compare those who have complete knowledge of the Veda and practice it with those who completely know and practice the teachings of the Buddha, and come up with the calculation that the worth of the former constitutes one-sixteenth of the latter.[82] Furthermore, a true expert of the Veda (*vedagū*) and a true intellectual (*sottiya*) is not someone versed in Brahmanistic scripture, but one who has obtained perfect knowledge transcending all the various scholarly disciplines.[83] Indeed, the Buddhist critique of Vedic scripture condemned it as a body of compilations serving the interests of greedy brāhmaṇas[84] or the work of brāhmaṇas who had not been able to endure a life of abstinence in the forest.[85]

The Buddhist sources denounce the extent to which "present day brāhmaṇas" have fallen into decadence compared to the "brāhmaṇas of antiquity," as summed

Brāhmaṇas of Antiquity and the Present Day Brāhmaṇas

Brāhmaṇas of Antiquity	Present Day Brāhmaṇas
Wrote *mantas* and explained them.	Chant, recite and teach the *mantas* of antiquity.
Were self-disciplined, renounced the five desires, and encouraged asceticism.	Decorate themselves, indulge freely in the five pleasures, enjoy expensive cuisine, are served by well-dressed and well-groomed women, ride in handsome vehicles and live in mansions.
Married only brāhmaṇa women.	Marry either brāhmaṇa or non-brāhmaṇa women.
Approached their brāhmaṇa wives only during gestation.	Approach brāhmaṇa or non-brāhmaṇa women whenever they please.
Did not buy and sell brāhmaṇa women, and loved and resided with only their wives.	Buy and sell brāhmaṇa women and love and reside with them.
Did not accumulate the comforts of life, grain, gold and silver, or domestic animals.	Desire and accumulate the comforts of life, grain, gold and silver and domestic animals.
Begged for their morning and evening meals.	Eat whenever they please and as much as they want, and take away uneaten food.
Befriended cows and would never kill one.	Kill many cows in their sacrificial rituals.

[80] *MN.* II, p. 200.
[81] See note 68. *J.* VI, p. 213.
[82] *AN.* I, pp. 163-66.
[83] *Suttanipāta*, vv.528-29, 533-34.
[84] *Ibid.* vv.302-09.
[85] See note 75.

up in the following table.[86]

The Buddhist sources tend to adopt a line of reasoning that first dismisses the claims of present day brāhmaṇas, then turn to a discussion of what constitutes a true brāhmaṇa: namely, one who acts in the completely opposite manner to contemporary pedigreed brāhmaṇas. When asked what kind of person he thought could be called a true brāhmaṇa, the Buddha replied,[87]

> Only those among the brāhmaṇas who isolate themselves from evil ways, are not conceited, are not defiled, are able to control themselves, are well-versed in the Veda and live ascetic lives of abstinence can truly call themselves brāhmaṇas; but there are not many of them around today.

On the other hand, the *Mahāniddesa*, a work of annotation, states that the original meaning of the term "brāhmaṇa" is "*bāhita*" (avoided), explaining,[88]

> A brāhmaṇa is such because he avoids the following seven conducts: to consider himself to be permanent, doubt, blind obedience to rules of moral conduct and prohibitions, greed, anger, stupidity, and conceit. He avoids various evil and flawed ways which are defiled enough to cause rebirth, mental anguish, retribution of misery, and another birth, old age and death.

Almost the same description appears in the oldest works of Buddhist scripture, the *Dhammapada* and the *Suttanipāta*:[89] in sum, brāhmaṇas are those who make superhuman effort, eliminate their evil deeds, and free themselves from mental anguish. Of course, the best model for such a person was the Buddha himself. The Buddhist sources refer to him as "a great brāhmaṇa (*mahābrāhmaṇa*)" and "the greatest brāhmaṇa who ever existed among gods and men (*sadevake loke aggabrāhmaṇa*)."[90] We find a brāhmaṇa (by birth) praising the Buddha, saying, "*Bho Gotamo brāhmaṇo bhavaṃ* (Oh Gotama! You yourself are a brāhmaṇa)."[91] It is in this way that the Buddhist sources renounced the authority exercised by brāhmaṇas who became so by merely being born into the varṇa, while reserving the term "brāhmaṇa" in the sense of "the ultimate ascetic" for the Buddha himself; as well as the terms *vedagū* and *sottiya*, formerly attributed to only the most erudite among the brāhmaṇa varṇa.[92]

[86] *DN.* I, pp. 104-05. *AN.* III, pp. 221-22. *Suttanipāta*, vv.284-315.
[87] *VP.* I, p. 3.
[88] *Mahāniddesa*, pp. 86-87.
[89] *Dhammapada*, vv.396-423. *Suttanipāta*, vv.620-47.
[90] *J.* I, p. 335; III, p. 44.
[91] *SN.* I, p. 167.
[92] The northern Buddhist scripture, *Vajrasūci*, contains more or less the same critical argument introduced here. See S. Mukhopadhyaya ed. and tr., *The Vajrasūci of Aśraghoṣa*, Santiniketan, 1950.

D. Brāhmaṇa Life and Renunciation

In this section we will look at the brāhmaṇa's stages of life as described and criticized in the *Jātakas*. Let us begin with the following two examples.

> A male child was born to a wealthy brāhmaṇa family in Benares. When he reached adulthood (*vayappatto*), he went to Taxila and studied many aspects of scholarship (*sabbasippāni*). After his studies were completed, he returned home to Benares, took a wife, and after the death of his parents became head of his household. Later he renounced the world (*pabbajjā*) above the pleas of his relatives not to. He went into the Himalayas, and while living on roots and fruit, he was able to realize supernatural knowledge and skills (*abhiññā*), and the religious attainment through ecstatic meditation (*samāpatti*). Later, he left the mountains to beg during the rainy season and ended up settling in the royal park in Benares, living there under the king's protection for twelve years, after which he returned to the mountains to live out his life. After his death, he was reborn into Brahmaloka.[93]

> A male child was born to a brāhmaṇa family in Benares. When he reached adulthood, he went to Taxila, studied every field of scholarship there, then returned to his father and mother. The youth desired to renounce the world, but his parents persuaded him otherwise. So he married the daughter of a brāhmaṇa instead. However, the young couple lived a marriage void of sensuality. After the death of his parents, he gave all of his wealth away and went with his wife to live in the Himalayas, renouncing the world and becoming ascetics (*tāpasapabbajjā*). Later the couple left the mountains and settled in the royal park at Benares, living as mendicants. When his wife died, he returned to the mountains, attaining mystic meditation (*jhāna*) and realizing *abhiññā*. After his death, he was reborn into Brahmaloka.[94]

The lives of both of these brāhmaṇas passed through five phases: (1) birth into a brāhmaṇa family, (2) study under a teacher (student stage), (3) return home, marry and inherit the family household (householder stage), (4) renouncing the world to live in the mountains or in a royal park (forest dweller & mendicant stages), and (5) rebirth into Brahmaloka. However, there are many brāhmaṇas appearing in the *Jātakas* who missed one or more of those phases. One reason for this is of course

[93] *J.* II, pp. 272-77.
[94] *J.* III, pp. 93-97.

that any given story may be incomplete; but there are cases in which one or more of them was obviously skipped. Here are some examples of the latter.

> [Phase (2) missing] When the son of one brāhmaṇa merchant of the kingdom of Kāsi reached the age of sixteen, his father had him carry wares on his back and peddle them through villages and towns on his way to Benares.[95]

> [Phase (3) missing] When one son of a brāhmaṇa family in Benares reached the age of sixteen, his parents told him that if he desired to be born into Brahmaloka, he should take the fire that had burned since his birth (*jātaggi*), go into the forest and worship the fire. However, if he desired to live at home, he should first go to Taxila and study under a well-known teacher, then return to inherit and protect the family wealth (*kuṭumbaṃ saṇṭhapehi*). He chose the latter and went to Taxila to study, but soon he discovered how deeply sinful the secular world really was. When he returned home, the young man told his parents that he had no use for home life, and had decided to renounce the world. He did so and was later reborn into Brahmaloka.[96]

> [Phases (2) and (3) missing] Another brāhmaṇa youth decided to take the advice of his parents about being reborn into Brahmaloka and went directly into the forest with his *jātaggi*. After building a hut and living there for some time, he realized how worthless it was to worship fire, then renounced the world to become a saint (*isipabbajjā*). He attained both *abhiññā* and *samāpatti*, and after his death was reborn into Brahmaloka.[97]

> [Phase (4) missing] One brāhmaṇa, after completing his student stage, became a well-known teacher in Benares with an enrollment of five hundred students. After living out his life as an educator, he was reborn into a place suitable to his worldly deeds (*yathā kammaṃ gato*).[98]

Of these four examples, the third does have a brāhmaṇa dwelling in the forest, then renouncing the world and turning to a life of asceticism,[99] indicating the third and fourth stages of life; however, it seems more happenstance than a conscious effort at transition between the two stages. In other words, the *Jātakas* found no interest in the *āśrama* system as preached in the works of Hindu law.

What we do find, although, is that life after renouncing the world took various

[95] *J.* II, p. 15.
[96] *J.* I, pp. 285-89.
[97] *J.* I, pp. 494-95.
[98] *J.* I, p. 436.
[99] Also, *J.* II, pp. 43-45.

forms, including living out one's life in the forest (the Himalayas in particular), leaving the forest to live out one's life as a mendicant in populated areas, or returning from mendicancy back into the forest to live out one's life. The *Jātakas* usually note simply that the reason for coming out of the forest from time to time was "to obtain salty or sour food." However, there is also the following explanation.

> When continuous rains fall in the Himalayas during the wet season, it becomes impossible to obtain shoots, tubers or various kinds of fruit; and since the leaves also fall, many ascetics leave the mountains to live in near-by towns or villages... When the flowers bloom and fruit ripens in the mountains again, they return to their huts.[100]
> "I think I'll go down to the settlement to seek something salty and sour, so that my body will be healthy again and it will be easier to walk. Moreover, heaven will be promised for those who honor and give food to a meritorious person like me."[101]

The various ways in which brāhmaṇas lived their lives as described in the *Jātakas* are summed up in the following table according to the previously delineated five phases they are said to have experienced. The table includes only brāhmaṇas

Life Patterns of Brāhmaṇas Described in the *Jātakas*

Life pattern	*Jātaka* number
All phases	106, *149****, 173, *251*, *259*, *281*, *284*, 310, *313*, *328*, 348, 362, 411, 414, *418*, *431*, 440, *443*, 453, 477, 488, 522, *528*, *530*.
(1) (2) ... (4) (5)	61, *66*, 99, 117, 165, *166*, 167, *175*, *180*, 273, 287, *319*, *323*, 334, *337*, *346*, *376*, *378*, 380, 392, *403*, 423, *433*, 467, *480*, 523, 526, 529, *532*.
(1)... (3) (4) (5)	*10*, 86, 120, 250, 290, 293, 330, 410, 422, *444*, *545*.
(1) ... (4) (5)*	*73*, *76*, *77*, 81, *87*, 124, 144, 161, 162, 169, 186, 197, 203, *235*, *244*, *246*, 253, 285, 299, 312, *314*, 490, *498*, 509.
(1) (2) (3)**	48, 64, 80, 119, 123, 130, 150, 163, 185, 200, 211, 214, 222, 245, 287, 305, 374, 401, 402, 413, 438, 474, 478.
(1) ... (3)	34, 41, 71, 136, 155, 174, 317, 354, 373, 377, 389, 442, 516.

* There are distinct possibilities in this group that phases (2) and/or (3) may have been experienced.
** That is, brāhmaṇas who did not renounce the world.
*** Numbers in Italics indicate instances of coming out of the mountains to live in or near settlements for either long or short periods of time.

[100] *J.* III, p. 37.
[101] *J.* II, p. 272.

who were the main or sub-characters of stories.

The table shows many of the brāhmaṇas appearing in the *Jātakas* abandoned their secular livelihoods and renounced the world (*pabbajjā*), but so do kings, wealthy gentry, and common people, although there are more brāhmaṇas following the practice than any other varṇas. Since Buddhism is a religion specifically based on the idea of renouncing the world, it is only natural that such renunciators are held in even higher esteem than kings or brāhmaṇas.[102]

The motivation behind *pabbajjā* includes 1) discovering that the various desires are the causes of misery and anguish, 2) discovering that having material wealth is meaningless, 3) sorrow over the loss of one's parents, and 4) fear of what death has in store.[103] There are various ages at which *Jātaka* characters entered *pabbajjā*, indicating another example of the work's lack of concern with the *Dharmasūtras*. According to the works of Hindu law, men could enter the forest dwelling stage with their wives. In the *Jātakas* we find men entering this stage not only with their wives, but also their parents, brothers and sisters, sons and friends.[104] After renouncing the world, a husband and wife cease their marital relationship to become co-ascetics.[105]

Those entering *pabbajjā* would go to live in the forest and survive by eating the fruits, wild plants and roots they could gather. The most ideal place was often said in a rather exaggerated expression to be the Himalayas. Many of those who lived secluded in the forest concentrated on attaining *samāpatti* and *abhiññā*. Such levels of consciousness were realized only after many years of training, in one case ten, in another over fifty.[106] There are cases of ascetics attaining them, only to fall back into the world of desire and lose their powers;[107] and of course, of those who failed and returned to the secular world (*uppabbajati*).[108] Of the latter who appear in the *Jātakas*, we find a king's servant, an administrator, an assistant *purohita* (priest to a king), and even a king.[109] There is a rare case of a king summoning one

[102] *J.* IV, pp. 370-73.
[103] *J.* I, p. 333; II, p. 417; *J.* IV, p. 28: *J.* III, p. 39; IV, pp. 7-8: *J.* II, pp. 283, 314, 411: *J.* III, p. 497.
[104] *J.* III, p. 94; IV, p. 23: *J.* III, p. 37: *J.* II, pp. 68, 269; IV, p. 220: *J.* V, p. 313: *J.* II, pp. 101, 283; IV, p. 237: *J.* IV, p. 28; VI, p. 256: *J.* IV, p. 305: *J.* IV, pp. 473-90; V, p. 133; VI, pp. 28-29.
[105] *J.* IV, p. 23.
[106] *J.* IV, pp. 23, 28.
[107] *J.* I, p. 304; II, pp. 274-75; III, pp. 498, 517.
[108] See also note 109. According to the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* (II, 183), those who abandoned their *pabbajjā* lives (*pravrajyāvasita*) were to be made slaves of the king for the rest of their lives. See also *Nārada-smṛti,* V, 35.
[109] *J.* III, p. 237; IV, p. 304: *J.* I, p. 326.

renunciator back to the secular world to administer justice.[110]

The final aim of those who entered *pabbajjā* was to be reborn into Brahmaloka. There are several stories which state clearly that virtuous people in the secular world will be reborn into heaven (*sagga*), while the virtuous among those who had renounced it will be reborn into Brahmaloka.[111] One of those who returned from *pabbajjā* to the secular world, became a meritorious king, and while he could not be reborn into Brahmaloka, left this world "in accordance with his deeds."[112] However, Brahmaloka was not a place of absolute peace and happiness, for it was possible to be reborn back into the world of humanity from there.[113] In order to be released completely from world of *karma* and *saṃsāra* (continuous reincarnation), one had to become a buddha. The *paccekabuddhas* that appear here and there in the *Jātakas* are such persons who achieved self-perfection and who are respected even more than *pabbajjā* ascetics.[114]

The reason why both the *Dharmasūtras* and *Manu-smṛti* emphasize the householder stage of life as the most important is because it is the stage which supported varṇa society. For orthodox brāhmaṇas, *pabbajjā* was ideally permitted only after one had completed his householder obligations. In contrast, the ideal of Buddhism was to separate oneself from the secular world, train, and achieve self-perfection; therefore, renouncing the world and entering a Buddhist order (*saṅgha*) was unconditional, having no required age qualifications.

In any case, the wave of unorthodox factions which appeared encouraging *pabbajjā* posed a vexing problem for orthodox brāhmaṇas. One father, at his wits end over his sixteen year old son's wish to enter *pabbajjā*, told him,

> First study the Veda, then seek your fortune. Have children and establish your household. Enjoy fragrances and tastes, oh my son. Then after experiencing all that, go into the forest. That is the praiseworthy way of renouncing the world and becoming an ascetic.[115]

Despite his father's advice, the son decided to renounce the world immediately.

[110] *J.* V, p. 229.
[111] *J.* II, p. 318; III, p. 355; IV, p. 78.
[112] *J.* I, p. 326.
[113] *J.* I, p. 432; II, p. 328; III, p. 93.
[114] *J.* IV, p. 370.
[115] *J.* IV, p. 477.

Chapter III
BRĀHMAṆAS AND KINGSHIP

According to the works of Hindu law, both the brāhmaṇa priesthood and the king (*rājā*), representing the kṣatriya varṇa, are described as having great divine natures and as the legitimate rulers over the Earth. This may seem contradictory at first, but under the varṇa system, which separates church and state, brāhmaṇas are the lords of the sacred world, the king of the secular world.[1]

The two varṇas set up a division of labor between themselves and utilized one another's powers in establishing their control over the more numerous vaiśya and śūdra varṇas. However, the orthodox brāhmaṇa texts emphasize that from the standpoint of the ritual order, priestly power and authority stands above kingship. On the other hand, in reality, we frequently observe interference on the part of kings in priestly affairs and brāhmaṇa subordination to royal authority. As we have seen previously, brāhmaṇas responded with a very flexible attitude to matters in the real world that did not conform to their ideals.

Descriptions of the ideal relationship between brāhmaṇas and kings and the debates over which form of authority, priestly or secular, is paramount appear in the literature as early as the Vedic ages,[2] and are continued and developed in the later texts. This chapter will be concerned with the fundamental task of categorizing and putting into some order of related topics as discussed in the works of Hindu law, the *Arthaśāstra*, and Buddhist scripture.

1. Hindu Law

A. Brāhmaṇas and Kings

The *Dharmasūtras*, which were written based on the ideas of orthodox brāhmaṇas, argue that the varṇa system is a sacred institution that has existed since the creation

[1] There is an enormous amount of research literature on the relationship between brāhmaṇas and kings, including U. N. Ghoshal, *A History of Indian Political Ideas*, Madras, (1st pub. 1959), 1966. J. Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View*, Leiden, 1966. L. Dumont, *Religion, Politics and History in India*, Paris, 1970, pp. 62-68. R. Lingat, *The Classical Law of India*, (tr. by J. D. M. Derrett), London, 1973. M. Hara, "Literacy and Martial Arts: Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas," *Nihon Bukkyō-Gakkai Nenpō*, No. 36 (1970), pp. 1-31 (in Japanese).

[2] U. N. Ghoshal, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-37. M. K. Dutt, *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, Vol. I, 2nd ed., Calcutta, 1968, pp. 42-48, 72-81. R. N. Sharma, *Brahmins through the Ages*, Delhi, 1977, pp. 1-56.

of man;[3] and the first two varṇas, brāhmaṇa and kṣatriya, have been charged with the duties of protecting mankind and preserving the world order.

> Both the king and brāhmaṇas well-versed in the Veda preserve the world's moral order. The existence of humans consisted of four [varṇas], things possessing internal consciousness (trees, etc.), and beings that walk, fly and crawl are all dependent on both of them, as are the protection of offspring, prevention of confusion [among the varṇas] and the *dharma* (*Gaut.* VIII, 1-3).
> It is explained in the Veda that brāhmaṇas together with kṣatriyas support the gods, spirits of ancestors, and living humans (*ibid.* XI, 27).

Although these provisions seems to place brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas on an equal level, the *Dharmasūtras* have prepared other articles that clearly place brāhmaṇas over the king.

> The [lesser] three varṇas should live their lives according to the advice of brāhamaṇas. Brāhmaṇas are to declare their duties (*dharma*), and the king should rule over them [according such declarations]... The king over brāhmaṇas is [the god] Soma (*Vās.* I, 39-41, 45).
> Know that a ten year old brāhmaṇa and a hundred year old kṣatriya are related like father and son, but the brāhmaṇa is the father between the two.[4]
> The road belongs to the king if he does not meet a brāhmaṇa along the way. If they do meet, then the road belongs to the brāhmaṇa.[5]

The first citation tells us that the king is not the promulgator of the *dharma*, but is rather the protector of the lives and property of the people and the order of society in accordance with sacred law. The phrase "The king over brāhmaṇas is Soma" is also spoken during the king's enthronement ceremony by the presiding brāhmaṇa for the purpose of emphasizing that the latter's varṇa exists independent of kingship.[6]

[3] *Vās.* IV, 2. *Baudh.* I, 10, 18, 2-6.

[4] *Āp.* I, 4, 14, 25. cf. *Manu*, II, 135.

[5] *Āp.* II, 5, 11, 5-6. cf. *Gaut.* VI, 24-25. *Vās.* XIII, 59. *Manu*, II, 138-39. However, brāhmaṇas should respect the king with congratulatory phrases and the like. *Gaut.* XI, 7-8.

[6] U. N. Ghoshal, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-35. Soma is originally the name of the sacred wine (and its ingredients) that is an important offering in Vedic ritual, then was deified. There is also a part of the enthronement ceremony where the *adhvaryu* priest and his assistants strike the back of the king silently with sticks, an act apparently indicating the former's priestly authority or an act of purification. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, V, 4, 4, 7. J. C. Heesterman has challenged the view that Soma rules over brāhmaṇas independently of kingship, arguing that Soma was

In courts of law, as well, arbitrary judgements on the part of the king are strictly prohibited and he is urged to hand down judgements in accordance with the opinions of either the sacred works transmitted by brāhmaṇas or of learned brāhmaṇas themselves.

> The administration of justice [by the king] should be done based on the Veda, *Dharmaśāstras*, *Aṅgas* (auxiliary works), *Upavedas* (subordinate works of the Veda) and *Purāṇas* (old legends) (*Gaut.* XI, 19).
> In cases where there is contradictory evidence, [the king] should make his decision only after consulting brāhamaṇas well-versed in the three Vedas. This is because by doing so he will enjoy the greatest blessings [in both this life and the hereafter].[7]
> Whenever unsure [of the standing provisions], it is best to follow [the procedures] recommended by ten learned [brāhmaṇas] of excellent reasoning and free of greed or corruption. A *pariṣad* (council) should at least be made up of the following ten members: four who have thorough knowledge of the four Vedas, three who are in the first three stages of life, and three possessing different [interpretations of the] law. If it is not possible to get them, the advice of a brāhmaṇa scholar (*śrotriya*) who knows the Veda and has studied [the law correctly] should be followed in doubtful cases. This is because such persons would never [unjustly] hurt or favor any living being.[8]

Purohitas, who served the state and the royal family, held the highest position among those brāhmaṇas performing priestly duties. Already in Vedic times, *purohitas*, who had mastered *Atharva-Veda* incantations, had been given the role of protecting the king and the state;[9] and the *Dharmasūtras* say this about them.

identified with the king, who is the host of the ritual. J. C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*, The Hague, 1957, pp. 71, 94 ff.

[7] *Gaut.* XI, 25-26. The king should also consult with a learned brāhmaṇa before granting leniency. *Āp.* II, 10, 27, 20. *Gaut.* XII, 52.

[8] *Gaut.* XXVIII, 48-51. See also, *Āp.* II, 11, 29, 13-14. *Vās.* III, 20. *Baudh.* I, 1, 1, 7-9. *Manu*, XII, 108-13. There is a provision that a witness of non-brāhmaṇa origin should swear an oath before the gods, the king and brāhmaṇas. *Gaut.* XIII, 13. There is also a remark that one wiseman (or 3, 4, or 5 of them) is able to interpret sacred law, while a thousand fools could never come to a correct decision. *Vās.* III, 5, 7. *Baudh.* I, 1, 1, 9, 16.

[9] V. W. Karambelkar, "Brahman and Purohita in Atharvanic Texts," *Indian Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXVI (1950), pp. 293-300. J. Gonda, "purohita," *Studia Indologica*, (Festschrift für W. Kirfel), Bonn, 1955, pp. 107-24. The term "*purohita*" literally means "one who is placed in front (as an honored guest, an officiating priest, or one who defends the king from harm)." From the beginning of the AD calendar on, *purohitas* began to be stripped of their former importance by ministers of state, astrologers, etc. H. Scharfe, *The State in Indian*

> The king should bestow the title of *purohita* on a brāhmaṇa well-versed in the Veda, of good family, eloquent, handsome, of the right age, virtuous, righteous and serious. [Religious] duties should be carried out with his assistance. This is because the Veda teaches us that kṣatriyas who are assisted by brāhmaṇas prosper and never encounter difficulty.[10]
> For this reason, the king should appoint a *purohita* in order to carry out the duties determined for those in the householder stage of life. It is taught that the country with a brāhamaṇa as *purohita* prospers, because both [the duties of the king and of the householder] are protected; it would be impossible [for the king alone to carry out both sets of duties] (*Vās.* XIX, 3-6).

As we will see later on, *purohitas* often went beyond their religious duties to play important roles in the affairs of state. They also bore part of the blame for crimes committed by the king and served in atonement for them. This probably also meant that *purohitas* were atoning for their own wrongdoing in not guiding the king properly.

> Any king who allows a criminal to go free should fast for one [day and] night and his *purohita* for three [days and] nights. In the case of punishing an innocent person, the *purohita* must do *kṛcchra* [penance] and the king [must fast] for three [days and] nights.[11]

Purohitas were also appointed by the king to try members of the brāhmaṇa varṇa who broke the law and prescribe means of atonement for them.[12] Of course, there were many other brāhmaṇas to officiate over ceremonies for the state and the royal family, and many brāhmaṇas also seem to have been appointed to ministerial and other bureaucratic posts.[13] Furthermore, under the conditions of "times of distress" discussed in Chapter I, there is the possibility that brāhmaṇas could have become soldiers, as well.

Tradition, Leiden, 1989, pp. 112-13, 117-18.

[10] *Gaut.* XI, 12-14. See also, *Baudh.* I, 10, 18, 7-8. *Manu*, VII, 78. *Yāj.* I, 312. The king also appointed priests, called *ṛtvij*, to conduct various Vedic ceremonies. *Gaut.* XI, 18. *Manu*, VII, 78. *Yāj.* I, 313.

[11] *Vās.* XIX, 40-43. Concerning *kṛcchra* see *Baudh.* II, 1, 2, 38-45; III, 8, 1-31; IV, 5, 6-21. Also, p. 204, note 57 of this volume. There is also a provision stating that any king who does not punish a criminal becomes guilty of the same crime himself. *Āp.* II, 11, 28, 13.

[12] *Āp.* II, 5, 10, 13-16.

[13] Bureaucrats were selected from the pure and loyal members of the first three (twice-born) varṇas. *Āp.* II, 10, 26, 4.

B. The Privileges of Brāhmaṇas

Due to the fact that brāhmaṇas were indispensable to the prosperity of the state, the king came to undertake responsibility for their protection and livelihood. Here are some examples of what the *Dharmasūtras* say about this obligation.

> No brāhmaṇa within [a king's] realm should by either scarcity or intent be made to go hungry, suffer sickness or suffer from cold or heat (*Āp.* II, 10, 25, 11).
> A king who without ill-treatment to their retainers bestows land and money on brāhmaṇas according to [their virtue and learning] will attain worlds that know no limits (*Ibid.* II, 10, 26, 1).
> A king who is killed attempting to take back a brāhmaṇa's possessions is said to have made his own body into a sacrificial post and performed the sacrifice of unlimited fee (*Ibid.* II, 10, 26, 2).

The *Dharmasūtras* also permit brāhmaṇas in times of distress to beg for alms from the king and any starving brāhmaṇa to steal food if need be, blaming the king's dereliction of duty for the latter.[14] Kings who rose from the śūdra varṇa or those displaying insincerity were for brāhmaṇas unworthy as almsgivers. However, under the pretext of times of distress, they were allowed to accept alms from such inferior kings.

Another economic privilege reserved for brāhmaṇas was tax exemption. The *Dharmasūtras* explain in the following manner.

> A king who rules in accordance with sacred law is entitled to one-sixth of [their subjects'] wealth [in the form of taxation]. However, he must not [tax] the brāhmaṇas, because [as the Veda explains], he gets one-sixth share [of all the merit generated by brāhmaṇas] by their sacrifices and benevolence. It is also taught, "the brāhmaṇas enrich the Veda. They deliver men from misfortune. Therefore, the brāhmaṇas must not be made the object of expropriation. Soma is their king." It is also said that [any king who has never oppressed a brāhmaṇa] will enjoy peace and happiness in the next life (*Vās.* I, 42-46).

Despite such rhetoric, it is not certain whether all brāhmaṇas were completely tax exempt, for according to some provisions, the tax exemption privilege would in principle apply only to *śrotriyas*; that is, brāhmaṇas well-versed in the Veda and performing meritorious acts.[15] There were many brāhmaṇas who were engaged in

[14] *Gaut.* IX, 63; XVIII, 28-32. *Vās.* XII, 2-3. Also, *Manu*, X, 113; XI, 11-22.

[15] *Vās.* XIX, 23-24, 37. The *Manu-smṛti* (VIII, 394) prohibits the king from taxing anyone who serves a *śrotriya*. According to Kullūka's annotation, the term "serve" is understood to mean to serve through property, grain, labor service, etc. If so, this would indicate alms indirectly bestowed by the king on brāhmaṇas.

occupations attributed to the lower varṇas and did not have the "religious wherewithal" to pay, one-sixth of the merit they earned. There is a strong possibility that those engaged in either prohibited or semi-legitimate livelihoods did have to pay income taxes.[16] However, if so, being brāhmaṇas, there may have been measures taken to reduce their tax burdens. For example, according to the later *Bṛhaspati-smṛti*, brāhmaṇas engaged in commerce were subject to a lower tax rate than any business partners of other varṇas.[17]

One more economic privilege preserved for brāhmaṇas was immunity from having their property seized. Although the property of persons with no heirs was ultimately appropriated by the king, heirless brāhmaṇa property was considered an exception and was apportioned among *śrotriyas*.[18] One *Dharmasūtra* explains why in the following manner.

> However, the king must never expropriate brāhmaṇa property, because his property is frightfully poisonous. It is said that [ordinary] poison is not [the worst] poison. Brāhmaṇa property is said to be [the worst] poison. [Ordinary] poison only kills the one [who takes it], but brāhmaṇa property destroys even the children and grandchildren [of those who take it]. [The king should rather bestow such property] on those brāhmaṇas well-versed in the three Vedas.[19]

The *Dharmasūtras* also list the order of those in line to inherit property: sons and kin, followed by their teachers (*ācārya*), and their priests (*ṛtvij*).[20] If such a rule held for all three twice-born varṇas, then there is the distinct possibility that brāhmaṇas were in line to inherit the property of their non-brāhmaṇa students and religious clients, but it is doubtful whether the rule was actually put into effect.

[16] On this particular point see, P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, II-1, p. 145.

[17] *Bṛh.* XIV, 11-13. The payment to be made to the king whenever retrieving the goods of a deceased business partner seized by a local government agency depended on the varṇa of the claimant: 1/20th the value of the goods, 1/12th, 1/9th and 1/6th in descending varṇa order.

[18] *Gaut.* XXVIII, 41-42.

[19] *Vās.* XVII, 84-87. cf. *Baudh.* I, 5, 11, 15-16. According to the *Nārada-smṛti* (I, 112-13), on the death of a brāhmaṇa lender, the debts owed him are to be repaid to his family; and if there are not even any distant kin, they are to be paid to other brāhamaṇas. If there are no appropriate brāhamaṇas, they are to be thrown into the water. The king has no right to collect such debts.

[20] Other possibilities are sons → kin → teacher → disciples/daughters → the king (*Āp.* II, 6, 14, 1-5); sons → kin/step-sons → teacher/disciples → the king (*Vās.* XVII, 81-83); sons → kin → extended family → teacher/disciples/priests → the king (*Baudh.* I, 5, 11, 11-14). See also, *Manu*, IX, 187-89.

Other economic privileges enjoyed by brāhmaṇas included a 2% interest rate, as opposed to 3%, 4% and 5% rates respectively for the other three varṇas[21] and 100% share of any unclaimed property they unearthed, as opposed to a one-sixth share for finders belonging to the other varṇas, the other five-sixths going to the king.[22] Customarily any unclaimed property used by someone else beside the owner for ten years reverted to the user, with the exception of the property of *śrotriyas* and the king.[23]

The penal code also favored brāhmaṇas in various ways, which may be summed in the following manner.

> The brāhmaṇa should be exempted by the king from the following six kinds of treatment: capital punishment, imprisonment, fines, exile, revile and exclusion. (*Gaut.* VIII, 12-13)

The item just preceding this provision mentions that it applies only to learned brāhmaṇas who live their lives in accordance with the law; however, there are other provisions in the *Dharmasūtras* that prohibit the heaviest of punishments for all members of the brāhmaṇa varṇa.

> Brāhmaṇas must never be sentenced to corporal punishment for any crime.[24] Brāhmaṇas must never be subjected to corporal punishment. [Their punishments must be] preventing recidivism, making publicly known the crime, exile and branding.[25]

These prohibitions on corporal punishment (*vadha, śārīradaṇḍa*) probably refer to such forms as the death penalty and dismemberment. The worst crime imaginable, the murder of a brāhmaṇa, was for brāhmaṇas themselves punishable by "branding and exile."[26]

[21] *Vās.* II, 48. cf. *Manu,* VIII, 142.
[22] *Vās.* III, 13-14. cf. *Gaut.* X, 43-45. See also pp. 106-07 of this volme.
[23] *Vās.* XVI, 16-18. cf. *Manu,* VIII, 148-49.
[24] *Baudh.* I, 10, 18, 17. cf. *Āp.* II, 5, 10, 16.
[25] *Gaut.* XII, 46-47. cf. *Manu,* VIII, 123-24, 379-80; IX, 241.
[26] There were exceptions, however. Anyone, including brāhmaṇas, who attacked with intent to kill (*ātatāyin*) was subject to death. *Vās.* III, 16-18. *Baudh.* I, 10, 18, 12-13. *Manu,* VIII, 350-51. One form of atonement for the grievous crime of stealing gold from a brāhmaṇa was appearing before the king and presenting a club for the king to use to administer a lethal beating. *Āp.* I, 9, 25, 4-5. *Gaut.* XII, 43-45. *Vās.* XX, 41. *Baudh.* II, 1, 1, 16-17. *Manu,* XI, 100-01. The same applied if the thief was a brāhmaṇa; however, the gesture seems to have been a symbolic ritual of atonement, not a form of the death penalty. In the later works of Hindu law, prohibitions on the death penalty for brāhmaṇas became more flexible, as execution was recognized under certain conditions. P. V. Kane, *op. cit.*, Vol. II-1, pp. 140-43.

For the crimes of verbal abuse, rape, and assault, brāhmaṇa perpetrators were treated more leniently than others, while similar crimes involving brāhmaṇa victims were treated with more severity than otherwise. One exception was theft, in which case a brāhmaṇa would be subject to the heaviest of fines.

> A śūdra thief must pay eight times the amount stolen, and the fine is doubled for each varṇa thereafter. This is because the more educated the offender, the more severe the penalty should be.[27]

What this means is that a brāhmaṇa thief would end up being fined sixty-four times the value of the stolen property. This type of escalation according to rank is based on the ideal that the quality of one's moral conduct should correspond to the quality (rank) of the varṇa into which he was born. In actuality, however, severe punishment, including capital punishment, was meted out to śūdras guilty of theft.[28]

One more legal privilege bestowed upon brāhmaṇas was that they could not be summoned as trial witnesses against their wills.[29] There is also the provision that committing perjury for the sake of a brāhmaṇa would not result in the loss of one's varṇa.[30]

On the other hand, the *Dharmasūtras* do not forget to provide for the punishment of brāhmaṇas who are derelict in their religious duties.

> Brāhmaṇas who do not perform their dawn and twilight devotions at the predetermined times do not deserve to be called such. A just king should order such brāhmaṇas to do the work of śūdras, as he sees fit (*Baudh.* II, 4, 7, 15).

C. Supplementation Added by the Manu-smṛti

In the *Manu-srmṛti,* kings are described as figures superior to all creation in their brilliance (*tejas*), equal to Indra and the other gods in valor (*prabhāva*) and embody-

[27] *Gaut.* XII, 15-17. cf. *Manu,* VIII, 337-38.
[28] For example, a śūdra guilty of murder, theft or illegal land seizure will have his property seized and then executed; a brāhmaṇa guilty of the same crimes is to be blinded (*Āp.* II, 10, 27, 16-17). According the annotator Haradatta, such "blinding (*cakṣunirodha*)" did not involve damaging or removing the eyeballs but depriving the criminal of sight through some kind of blindfold. Bühler's tr. p. 166, note. Also, P. Olivelle, *Dharmasūtras*, p. 528, note.
[29] *Gaut.* XIII, 4. *Baudh.* I, 10, 19, 13. cf. *Manu,* VIII, 65.
[30] *Vās.* XVI, 35. cf. *Manu,* VIII, 112.

ing grand divinity (*devatā*) in human form (VII, 3-12). Brāhmaṇas are also imbued with a sacred existence, and together both have been entrusted by the Creator with the fate of all living beings (IX, 327). However, when comparing the two, the *Manu-smṛti* never fails to insist that the divine nature of brāhmaṇas exceeds that of kings. Here are some passages, the content of which cannot be found in the *Dharmasūtras*.

> The king must never incur the wrath of brāhmaṇas, even under the worst of distresses. This is because angering brāhmaṇas will instantly destroy him together with his troops and vehicles (IX, 313).
> Whenever kṣatriyas become overbearing towards brāhmaṇas in any way, it is the duty of brāhmaṇas themselves to put a stop to it. This is because kṣatriyas were born from brāhmaṇas. Fire is born from water, kṣatriyas from brāhamaṇas and iron from stone. The all-penetrating force of those (fire, kṣatriyas and iron) is all assuaged within their mother's wombs (IX, 320-21).
> A brāhmaṇa well-versed in the *dharma* is not required to report anything to the king. He himself may punish those who do him harm by his own power alone. His own power is greater than that of the king. For that reason, a brāhmaṇa can punish his enemies by his own power alone. He should have no qualms about employing the sacred scriptures as taught by Athravan and Aṅgiras (magical spells of the *Atharva Veda*) in such pursuits. Speech, indeed, is the weapon of the brāhmaṇa, with that he should slay his enemies (XI, 31-33).

The second citation is none other than an explanation of varṇa origins with the purpose of subordinating kṣatriyas to brāhmaṇas,[31] while the third entrusts brāhmaṇas with the extra-statutory prerogative to work magic as they see fit. Besides the emphasis on brāhmaṇa superiority, the *Manu-smṛti*, reiterates the *Dharmasūtras'* fundamental view that the two varṇas should cooperate in allowing each other to accomplish their roles; one cannot prosper without the other (IX, 322). In one place, brāhmaṇas are described as the root of the tree (*mūla*), and kṣatriyas as its tip (*agra*) (IX, 84).

As to the day-to-day relationship between brāhmaṇas and kings, the *Manu-smṛti* says that after the king arises in the morning, he is to purify himself, make

[31] The argument that *kṣatra* (power, kṣatriya) originated from Brahman (brāhmaṇas) as an explanation why religious authority is superior to secular authority can be observed in the literature as early as the Later Vedic Age. U. N. Ghoshal, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-35. B. K. Smith, *Classifying the Universe, The Ancient Indian Varṇa System and the Origins of Caste*, New York, 1994, p. 41. The same argument is contained in the *Mahābhārata* (*Śāntiparvan*, 22, 6; 181, 10-14).

offerings to the fire, pay his respect to the brāhmaṇas around him, and then enter the audience hall. In addition, day in and day out he should respect brāhmaṇa elders well-versed in the Veda and learn from the most scholarly among them not only Vedic scripture, but also the disciplines of political science, ethics and the philosophy of *ātman* (ultimate self). Kings of course have their own close political advisors and ministers, but from time to time they should consult with the most erudite among the brāhmaṇas in making their final decisions on issues of crucial importance and should put their complete trust in their opinions and act accordingly. Kings are to select brāhmaṇas as both chief priests (*purohita*) and officiating priests (*ṛtvij*) to perform their household rituals and to conduct large-scale *śrauta* sacrifices. Finally, kings should ever be aware that almsgiving to brāhmaṇas will reap unlimited merit and should never worry about the amounts spent on them.[32]

The obligation on the part of kings to support brāhmaṇas and the economic and legal privileges of the latter are described in greater detail and with more urgency than in the *Dharmasūtras*. The *Manu-smṛti* also insists that any king who protects the people in the proper manner will reap one-sixth of the merit accumulated by them (including brāhmaṇas), and he who does not will suffer for one-sixth of the sins committed by the people, being destined for hell upon his death (VIII, 304-08; XI, 23). Provisions in the *Manu-smṛti* not found in the *Dharmasūtras* include 1) gradual payment for brāhmaṇas and hard labor for members of other varṇas who are unable to pay debts or fines (VIII, 177; IX, 229); 2) encouraging kings, upon retirement, to donate the wealth accumulated from fines to brāhmaṇas (IX, 323). In the latter case we find the following provision.

> No righteous king would expropriate the property of a man guilty of a grave sin [for his own profit], for such an act of greed would merely defile him with the guilt [of the offender]. He should either throw the fine into the water as an offering to Varuṇa or give it to a brāhmaṇa of superior scholarship and virtue. This is because Varuṇa is the lord of punishment and wields a whipping cane even over kings, while the brāhmaṇa well-versed in the Veda is the lord over the entire world (IX, 243-45).

In sum, brāhmaṇas were to receive wealth stemming from penal compensation in place of the gods, constituting proof that atonement had been made.

Another provision found in the *Manu-smṛti* specifies that kings should take pains to protect both the brāhmaṇas and the gods of conquered lands(VII, 201), thus indicating the importance of brāhmaṇas as the preservers of the social order. Furthermore, brāhmaṇas are listed along with arms, food and water, etc. as necessities for the defense of fortresses (VII, 75), since their magical powers were prob-

[32] *Manu*, VII, 37-43, 54-59, 78-86, 145.

ably considered militarily important.

The final chapter of the *Manu-smṛti* contains a nine-level schematic of the universal ritual order from the god Brahman down to plants and beasts. While kings, their *purohitas*, and kṣatriyas form the fifth rank, brāhmaṇas belong to the third rank along with hermits, ascetics, etc. (XII, 46, 48), indicating that the orthodox brāhmaṇa compilers of the work regarded *purohita* brāhmaṇas, who were deeply involved in secular matters, as inferior members of their priestly varṇa.[33]

2. The *Arthaśāstra*

The *Arthaśāstra* is the work explaining measures by which ambitious kings can both expand their realms and defend their territory. Since the order of the state to be safeguarded by such kings is based on the varṇa system (III, 1, 38), the *Arthaśāstra*, like the works of Hindu law, recognizes the superior position of brāhmaṇas, their role as interpreters of the *dharma* and their spiritual-magical powers as the performers of ritual. Furthermore, it argues that kings are always invincible with their support (I, 9, 11), encourages kings to respect and protect brāhamaṇas, and warns them that any acts of persecution would result in the decline and fall of their kingdoms (I, 6, 5-6).

Despite such general similarities, the *Arthaśāstra* displays a very different attitude in its discussion concerning brāhmaṇas. That is to say, in contrast to the deep concern with the ideology of brāhmaṇa supremacy in Hindu law, the main concern of the *Arthaśāstra* is with such problems as how useful brāhmaṇas are to kings and their realms, and how they should be employed in the process of governance. Therefore, we see in the latter not much emphasis on the idea that brāhmaṇas should be put above royalty. Rather, we find propositions that brāhmaṇas and their disciples, men and women who have renounced the world, etc., should be employed as intelligence agents, or that intelligence agents disguise themselves as brāhmaṇas, etc. to win the hearts of the people, stamp out rabble rousers at home, stir up discontent among the people of enemy countries, and even exploit the masses.[34] We also find in the *Arthaśāstra* the political viewpoint that gives royal edicts

[33] The commentator Bhāruci describes a *purohita* as a person with both ministerial and brāhmaṇa qualities (on the *Manu*, VII, 78). In one section of the *Mahābhārata* (*Śāntiparvan*, 77, 4), a *purohita* is described as "a brāhmaṇa equal to a kṣatriya," along with a *ṛtvij*, a councilor, a diplomat, a teacher of practical matters, and places him in an inferior position to "a brāhmaṇa equal to Brahman" or "a brāhmaṇa equal to the gods." J. C. Heesterman explains that the role of *purohitas* would be to exchange the defilement of the king for their own purity, which he sees as the reason why orthodox brāhmaṇas looked down upon them. *The Inner Conflict of Tradition*, Chicago, 1985, pp. 37-38.

[34] *Arth.* I, 10-14; IV, 4-6; V, 1-2; XII, 2-5; XIII, 1-3, etc.

(*rājaśāsana*) precedence over not only transactions (*vyavahāra*) and customs (*caritra*), but even the *dharma* (III, 1, 39-45).

Concerning the relationship between kings and brāhmaṇas, the *Arthaśāstra* contains even more detailed accounts than the *Manu-smṛti*. To begin with, we find brāhmaṇas teaching kings the various scholarly disciplines, starting with the learning the Veda. This education is to begin at the time the kings are still princes (I, 5, 7-16) and continues after their enthronement. According to daily schedules of kings recorded in the treatise, they would take time out twice a day, once in the morning, once in the afternoon, to study the Veda (I, 19, 11 & 19). Next there were brāhmaṇas who served kings as priests performing magic, reciting prayers, and making offerings, all for the purpose of protecting the royal family and the state from harm, including fire, floods, plague, famine, insect infestation, animal attacks, and evil spirits (IV, 3, 1-44; IX, 7, 82-84). They also are to go to the battlefield to pray for victory (X, 3, 32-37). Of these teachers and priests who served the king, the most prestigious were personal instructors (*ācārya*), *purohitas*, and officiating priests (*ṛtvij*). Everyday kings would receive benediction from them (I, 19, 23). According to a listing of salaries appearing in the treatise, all three received the highest salary of 48,000 *paṇas*, the same as royal councilors (*mantrin*), generals, the crown prince, and the king's mother and wife (V, 3, 3). They were also the recipients of newly reclaimed land, tax free to be inherited by their descendants (II, 1, 7).

The conditions for being appointed a *purohita* included hailing from a pedigreed family, being of impeccable virtue, being well-versed in the Veda and its auxiliary sciences (*aṅga*), the divine signs (*daiva*), omens (*nimitta*), and political science, and having the ability to use the magic of the *Atharva Veda* to prevent natural and human disasters (I, 9, 9): in other words, all of the things necessary to bring about good fortune and prosperity for the state. There is an item that instructs kings to be as obedient to their *purohitas* as disciples to their teachers, sons to their fathers and servants to their masters (I, 9, 10). *Purohitas* were in principle not considered bureaucrats within the governmental administration, but they often went beyond their priestly duties to become involved in both judiciary and executive affairs. For example, they were considered to hold the highest ranking advisory position with other royal councilors, many of them probably also brāhmaṇas (I, 9, 11; I, 10, 1). They were also put in charge of appointing and supervising ministers of state (I, 10, 1-4), trying Veda scholars and ascetics (I, 19, 31), and praying for victory and raising morale at the battlefront (X, 1, 6; X, 3, 28-37 & 43-44). On the other hand, the tremendous privileges and power enjoyed by *purohitas* became a threat to the very existence of kingship itself. The *Arthaśāstra* advises that kings should employ intelligence agents to keep watch on councilors and *purohitas* (I, 12, 6; IX, 3, 12-14). It also encourages kings who had conquered their enemies to separate the councilors and *purohitas* of the enemy kingdom and have them reside in border areas (XIII, 5, 16).

The *Arthaśāstra* also gives detailed descriptions of the bureaucratic administration surrounding the king, although mention is seldom made of the varṇas to which the officials belonged. However, considerable part of the upper level bureaucrats were surely of brāhmaṇa origin. There is no doubt that the judiciary function was dominated by brāhmaṇas, as well as the diplomatic corps (I, 16, 14-15). The previously mentioned listing of salaries includes fortune-tellers, sooth-sayers, astrologers, narrators of the old tradition, assistants to *purohitas* (all receiving 1000 *paṇas*), and teachers and scholars (1000-500 *paṇas*), almost all of supposedly brāhmaṇa origin (V, 3, 13&18). These salaries are equivalent to those of mid-level bureaucrats. Neither does the treatise deny that both brāhmaṇas and śūdras served in the military (IX, 2, 21-24), contrary to the formal prohibition on such a practice in the works of Hindu law.

It seems that brāhmaṇas received special compensation for performing sacrificial ceremonies sponsored by kings (II, 6, 11; V, 3, 20) and were also granted land (tax exempt and inheritable) from them in search of religious merit (II, 1, 7; III, 10, 9). Details concerning such land grants along with other religious expenses are recorded in registers kept by administrative offices on both the central and provincial levels (II, 6, 11; II, 7, 2). Ascetics and outstanding brāhmaṇa scholars were offered forests in which to train and perform ceremonies (II, 2, 2); and brāhmaṇas were also given salt free of charge (II, 12, 33), had the right to gather flowers, fruit and fallen grain and seeds for religious purposes (II, 24, 30), were allowed free passage at river crossings (II, 28, 18; III, 20, 14), and given priority in matters of inheritance (III, 5, 28-29; III, 16, 37).

Brāhmaṇa privileges in penal matters are more or less the same as mentioned in the works of Hindu law. For example, hard labor as payment for fines, torture and capital punishment were prohibited (III, 1, 37; IV, 8, 19&27); and for even the most serious of crimes, branding, exile and work in the mines were the most severe penalties (IV, 8, 28-29). Even in the cases of treason and conspiracy, considered to be the ultimate offenses and punishable by death, brāhmaṇas were to be imprisoned, exiled or subjected to some form of lesser corporal punishment[35] (IV, 11, 12; IX, 3, 14). Doing harm to a brāhmaṇa was considered more serious than harm done to a member of any other varṇa (III, 18, 7; IV, 10, 12-13; IV, 13, 1-2&32), in accordance with Hindu law. In the provision to prevent children from falling into slavery (III, 13, 1-2), the fine imposed on kinfolk for selling a child was 12 *paṇas* for śūdras, 24 *paṇas* for vaiśyas, 26 *paṇas* for kṣatriyas and 48 *paṇas* for brāhmaṇas, indicating that the treatise is urging brāhmaṇas to be aware that they occupy the top position in the social system. On the other hand, the punishment for persons of other

[35] The phrase, "should place in darkness (*tamaḥ praveśayet*)" (IV, 11, 12) is explained by R. P. Kangle as "blinding," rather than "imprisoning in a dark cellar" (Vol. II, p. 328, note). Concerning the meaning of blinding, see also Note 28 to this chapter.

varṇa selling a brāhmaṇa child was death.

One of the reasons why the *Arthaśāstra* urged kings to protect brāhmaṇas in their quest for militarily strong, economically prosperous kingdoms was the latter's role in preserving the social order. It calls upon kings to maintain the varṇa system in the territories they conquered (XIII, 4, 62), forbids them from appropriating the property of brāhmaṇas in that territory (III, 16, 28), and recommends granting them land, wealth, tax exemptions, etc. (XIII, 5, 11). One more reason stems from the magical powers possessed by brāhmaṇas, enabling them to save the kingdom from disaster and also exonerate and purify wrongdoing on the part of kings.

> Whenever a king punishes an innocent person, thirty times the value of the fine is to be dropped in water as an offering to Varuṇa and then given to brāhmaṇas. In this, the king's sin arising from his mistake will be purified. This is because it is Varuṇa who punishes kings who govern the people improperly (IV, 13, 42-43).
>
> Fire, flood, sickness, plague, panic, famine and demoniac mischief, these distresses are the results of providence; they can be overcome by prostration before the gods and brāhmaṇas. When heavy rain, drought or demonaic mischief does occur, it can be overcome by rites prescribed in the *Atharva Veda* and undertakings of holy men (IX, 7, 82-84).

3. Buddhist Sources

While the tenets of Buddhism prohibited varṇa social stratification from penetrating into the world of renunciation, they recognized the reality of the four-varṇa framework in the secular world. In the dialogue carried out between the Buddha and the king of Kosala we find:

> King: Blessed One, there are four varṇas: kṣatriya, brāhmaṇa, vaiśya and śūdra. Is there discrimination among them, or other differences?
>
> Buddha: Your Majesty,... of those four varṇas, kṣatriya and brāhmaṇa are considered the highest and are said to be worthy of a salute, standing at attention, joining of hands, and showing of respect.[36]

[36] *MN.* II, p. 128. However, the Buddha continues to mention that to attain the final object of renuciation, there is no varṇa distinction; it depends on personal ability and effort. *MN.* II, pp. 129-30.

This is probably not a direct quotation from the Buddha, who was critical about discrimination based on "birth," but it is noteworthy that this was the view on the varṇa system prevalent among the early Buddhist monks. One Buddhist source states: "Buddhas do not come from vaiśiya or śūdra families, only kṣatriya and brāhmaṇa ones."[37] Furthermore, as the order of varṇas in the Buddhist sources shows, the compilers considered kṣatriyas to be the highest varṇa in contradiction to Hindu law. We also see the following statements.

> Of those who value lineages (*gotta*), the kṣatriyas are the most exalted. Among gods and men, those who possess knowledge and practice are superior.[38]
> Among two-legged (i.e. mankind), kṣatriyas are the most exalted; among four-legged animals, the bull.[39]

Now, in order to argue the superiority of the kṣatriya varṇa, one would have to refute the idea of brāhmaṇa supremacy recognized under the varṇa system. This refutation was developed in the *Ambaṭṭha-sutta*. There, Ambaṭṭha, a young man of brāhmaṇa origin, tells the Buddha that kṣatriyas and the other two varṇas are obliged to serve brāhmaṇas, to which the Buddha replies with four reasons why that is not so.[40]

(1) The Kaṇhāyana, to which Ambaṭṭha belongs, is in fact a lineage of mixed blood stemming from a female slave (*dasī*) who served Sākiya kṣatriyas.
(2) A child born between a kṣatriya man and brāhmaṇa woman will be considered by brāhmaṇas to be a full-fledged member; but among kṣatriyas, since the child is of inferior blood on the maternal side, he would not be allowed enthronement with *abhiṣeka*.
(3) A child born between a kṣatriya woman and brāhmaṇa male would be accepted among brāhmaṇas as a full-fledged member, but among kṣatriyes he would be treated in the same way as (2), since his paternal bloodline has been tainted.
(4) Those who have been expelled from a brāhmaṇa community lose all contact with its members, while those who have been exiled from a kṣatriya community would be taken in by brāhmaṇas.

[37] *J.* I, p. 49. This passage follows with the words, "Today kṣatriya families are respected in society, be that I be born into one."
[38] *DN.* I, p. 99. *SN.* I, p. 153.
[39] *SN.* I, p. 6.
[40] *DN.* I, pp. 87-99.

Of course, all of these one-sided arguments would prove nothing from the standpoint of an orthodox brāhmaṇa; the reason why such attempts appear in the Buddhist literature can be explained as follows:

(1) Much of Buddhist scripture was compiled in the middle and lower Ganga basin, where the constraints of the varṇa system were relatively loose, and kṣatriyas were very active both in political and cultural affairs.
(2) Kṣatriyas supported Buddhism in those regions.
(3) Gotama Buddha was born from a kṣatriya family.
(4) Buddhist groups, which consisted of members from all varṇas, criticized brāhmaṇa supremacy.[41]

Next, let us look at what the *Jātakas* have to add about the relationship between brāhmaṇas and kings. Concerning *purohitas*, we find such expressions as "60,000 brāhmaṇas led by a *purohita*."[42] The duties of *purohitas* are mentioned as "guiding kings in both secular and sacred affairs."[43] Early every morning the *purohita* would go to the king and inquire about his health and be at his side to advise him.[44] There is also a story of a *purohita* frequently enjoying a game of dice with his king.[45] Their children grew up with princes, and in some stories they travelled together to Taxila to study.[46] This close friendship was often continued in the relationship between kings and their *purohitas*.[47] There are accounts of a brāhmaṇa from a foreign country being appointed *purohita, a purohita's* student who succeeded his teacher, and a *purohita* who had been dismissed from his duties[48]; but usually *prohitas'* sons (especially first-born) inherited their fathers' posts.[49] Such sons were sometimes appointed assistants (*upapurohita*) to their fathers.[50] We find an account of one *purohita* family's younger brother vying for its traditional post, but losing out to his nephew, the family's eldest son.[51]

[41] We observe the same tendency in the Jaina literature. For example, the founder of Jainism, Vardhamāna, is said to have been transferred from a brāhmaṇa to a kṣatriya womb and born into the latter family. G. S. P. Misra, *The Age of Vinaya*, New Delhi, 1972, p. 166.
[42] *J.* V, p. 178.
[43] *J.* II, p. 173; III, p. 400; VI, p. 131.
[44] *J.* IV, pp. 270, 272, 473; VI, p. 132.
[45] *J.* I, p. 289.
[46] *J.* III, pp. 30-31, 238, 391-92; V, pp. 247, 263.
[47] *J.* III, p. 392; IV, p. 473.
[48] *J.* II, p. 282: *J.* IV, p. 247: *J.* II, pp. 173, 427.
[49] *J.* I, p. 437; II, p. 173; III, p. 400. *DN.* II, pp. 230-32.
[50] *J.* IV, p. 304.
[51] *J.* III, pp. 454-55.

The duties of *purohitas* were, needless to say, their traditional brāhmaṇa work as priests;[52] but as noted above, there were also those who became involved in state affairs as close advisors to their kings. For example, they presided over legal trials, and took charge of administrative and fiscal affairs in their kings' absence.[53] There are also accounts of a *purohita* accompanying his king on tours in disguise, one fleeing the kingdom with the king, and one being entrusted with the right to decide who would be the next king.[54]

There were many other brāhmaṇa members of the king's entourage besides his *purohita*, performing diverse roles. Many were appointed ministers of state,[55] one of the more well-known of whom was Vassakāra of the Magadha kingdom, who served during the Buddha's lifetime and is said to have succeeded in defeating Magadha's northern rivals, the Licchavis, by persuading them to grant him political asylum, then throwing their country into chaos.[56] A large number of brāhmaṇas would be in attendance at any public ceremony sponsored by the king[57] and their divination techniques (astrology, dream analysis, facial feature and sword reading), together with their powers to ward off disaster, helped to put to rest doubts or confusion on the part of their kings.[58] There were also brāhmaṇas who became military leaders, marksmen and royal diplomats, as well as those who were granted generous royal protection for their outstanding virtue.[59] There is no doubt that a fair amount of brāhmaṇas served as middle and lower level bureaucrats, but the Buddhist literature does not go into detail concerning the varṇa origins of the officials mentioned. However, it goes without saying that any brāhmaṇa who did serve a king would have had to discard his "holier-than-thou" attitude and adopt one of subservience as a loyal member of the royal entourage.[60]

As compensation for the services rendered by the brāhmaṇas surrounding them, kings bestowed upon them such wealth as gold and silver, jewels, cows and horses, and slaves. Royal generosity abounded, particularly at large-scale state ceremonies, to the delight of the brāhmaṇas in attendance.[61] The Buddhist literature

52 *J*. II, p. 46; III, p. 45: *J*. III, p. 28. *VP*. IV, pp. 203-04: *J*. I, p. 335; VI. pp. 131-32.

53 *J*. I, p. 485; III, p. 159. *DN*. II, pp. 230-36: *J*. II, p. 187; V, p. 1; VI, p. 131: *J*. I, pp. 437-39.

54 *J*. IV, p. 370; V, pp. 101-08, 439-40: *J*. III, p. 417; IV, p. 88: *J*. III, pp. 238-39; IV, p. 40; V, p. 248.

55 *J*. III, pp. 337, 341.

56 G. P. Malalasekera, *Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names*, Vol. II, pp. 846-47.

57 *J*. III, pp. 44-45.

58 *J*. I, pp. 272, 455; II, pp. 427-28; III, pp. 43-44, 429.

59 *J*. II, p. 17; V, p. 131: *J*. V, pp. 127-28: *J*. II, p. 368; VI, p. 487: *J*. I, p. 369.

60 An example of such a compromise is the manner in which brāhmaṇas and their kings addressed one another. N. Wagle, *Society at the Time of the Buddha*, Bombay, 1966, pp. 66-67, 76-77.

61 *J*. I, p. 335; II, p. 46; III, pp. 44, 429.

scoffs at such a reaction, saying, "Brāhmaṇas are greedy for wealth."[62] What brāhmaṇas wanted most were villages (*gāma*), which were the sources of great wealth,[63] for any brāhmaṇa who was granted a village by the king could enjoy the taxes remitted by it for himself. Such a village was called *brahmadeyya* (village bestowed on a brāhmaṇa) and also *bhogagāma* (village for enjoyment).[64]

We observe descriptions of *brāhmaṇagāma* (brāhmaṇa village) in the Buddhist sources, which is a kind of settlement where a group of brāhmaṇas resided and engaged in cultivation themselves, or employed either slaves or hired laborers to cultivate on a larger scale.[65] From the description of one such village as "a *brahmadeyya* granted by King Bimbisāra of Maghada,"[66] we can probably interpret such villages as the granted villages mentioned above, or villages in which the brāhmaṇa recipients of tax-free lands decided to reside and cultivate/develop them. We can also surmise that many brāhmaṇas residing in such villages were in service to the king as priests, judges or bureaucrats. There is an account of eight residents of such a village being summoned by the king to serve as an embassy to a neighboring country.[67] In sum, the bestowal of village or land on brāhmaṇas was not only for religious purposes, but also stemmed from attempts to bolster the bureaucratic ranks, reclaim arable land, and maintain the social order in rural areas.[68]

The degree to which brāhmaṇas as a whole actually enjoyed the tax exemptions and extra-legal privileges is difficult to ascertain; however, since there are accounts of kings ordering the execution or assassination of brāhmaṇas,[69] we can at least say that there were times in which the prescriptions laid down by Hindu law were not strictly followed.[70] One Buddhist source argues, "the death penalty should be carried out regardless of varṇa," since "criminals lose their varṇas, whether brāhmaṇas or kṣatriyas, and come to be known merely by the name *thief*."[71]

62 *J*. I, p. 425.

63 *J*. II, pp. 428-29; IV, p. 97.

64 A more detailed description of these villages may be found in Chapter VIII.

65 *MN*. I, pp. 285, 400; II, p. 164. *AN*. I, p. 180: *SN*. I, p. 172. *J*. III, p. 293; IV, pp. 276-77. Also see, pp. 157-58.

66 *DN*. I, pp. 87, 111, 127, 131, 224, etc.

67 *J*. II, p. 368.

68 The brāhmaṇa villages described in the Buddhist sources were mainly located in the Maghada or Kosala kingdoms, while almost none existed in the tribal states of the Sākiyas, Mallas or Licchavis. N. Wagle, *op. cit*., pp. 18-19.

69 *J*. I, pp. 371, 439; II, pp. 187-88; IV, p. 246; V, p. 230.

70 R. Fick, *The Social Organisation in North-East India in Buddha's Time*, 2nd ed., Varanasi, 1972, pp. 211-12.

71 *MN*. II, p. 88.

Conclusions

From the above discussion classifying and examining the relationship between brāhmaṇas and kings in ancient India, we can probably come to following conclusions.

Under the varṇa system, there was a definite division of labor along the lines of leadership in religious and secular affairs between brāhmaṇas, on the one hand, and kṣatriyas, on the other; however, there was plenty of overlap between the two, brāhmaṇas becoming involved in the secular world, and kṣatriya kings becoming involved, sometimes interfering, in the brāhmaṇa religious world.

Regarding the relationship between kings and brāhmaṇas in the latter's roles as priests, brāhmaṇas, beginning with those in the post of *purohita*, guaranteed the sacred and legitimate nature of kṣatriya kingship through their religious authority and brought about prosperity for both the royal family and the state through their sacrificial rites and magical powers. Brāhmaṇas argued that since part of the merit they accumulated in the performance of their religious duties was conferred upon the king and the state, there was no necessity for them to pay taxes in material form. Brāhmaṇas also insisted that they could take responsibility for some part of the crimes committed by the king and perform expiation in his place. Since the brāhmaṇa varṇa as a whole was believed to have set itself up as contributor to increasing merit for the king and the state and ritually purifying their affairs, the kṣatriya kings usually dared not oppose what would seem in retrospect rather one-sided claims.

According to the principle of kingship in ancient India, the king was not the promulgator of the law, but rather had the duty to punish and reward, to protect the lives and property of the people, and to preserve the social order, all in accordance with sacred law (*dharma*), of which brāhmaṇas were the only authoritative interpreters. Brāhmaṇas also served the king in the capacity of ministers of state, legal magistrates, and lower level bureaucrats. The economic, political and legal privileges bestowed by the kings on brāhmaṇas may be interpreted as compensation to the brāhmaṇa varṇa for the contribution it was making to the prosperous maintenance of the kingdom as a whole.

Although the works of Hindu law and Buddhist scripture do not agree on the relative positions of brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas in the varṇa social order, both do agree on their privileged, leadership roles in ancient Indian society. From what we have observed from the accounts contained in the *Jātakas*, we can conclude that despite brāhmaṇas continuously harping on their social supremacy by virtue of ritual superiority, they were obliged to tone down the rhetoric and adopt less haughty, more flexible attitudes when taken into service under the king in exchange for large salaries, land and secular prestige. Again, the relationship between brāhmaṇas and kings was always basically one of mutual dependency and augmentation.

Part Two THE KṢATRIYA: WARRIORS AND KINGS

Chapter IV THE KṢATRIYA VARṆA

Introduction

During the Early Vedic Age (c.1500-1000 BC), at the time when various Aryan tribes migrated into the Punjab and settled there, social stratification within those tribes had already progressed to some extent. They consisted of an upper stratum of *rājanyas* centered around their chieftains (*rājan*, *rājā*), a stratum of priests, and one of tribal members (called *viś*) occupied in herding and agriculture during peacetime, and led into battle by their *rājan* in times of war. Politically, the power and authority of the *rājan* was limited by a tribal meeting called *sabhā* or *samiti*. Although social position was passed on to one's progeny, there were no insurmountable barriers set up between the strata, allowing a certain degree of mobility within tribal society.

From around 1000 BC, Aryans began moving their activities east into the upper Ganga basin. From that time on, during the Later Vedic Age (c.1000-600 BC), barriers did develop between strata and grew more and more impassable, leading to the eventual formation of the brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya and vaiśya varṇas. The second, which means those who hold power (*kṣatra*), became occupied by the former *rājanya* tribal stratum.[1] The chiefs who led kṣatriya groups expanded their power and authority, which soon developed into a form of kingship. Those who did become the rulers of countries (*janapada*) were expected to bring social order and stability to the Aryan and non-Aryan residents of the territories under their control. Although these kings did not completely cut their former tribal ties, the tribal meetings ceased to function, and royal lines of descent came into existence.

In order to strengthen their authority and legitimize their right to rule, these kings turned to brāhmaṇas to perform ceremonies on a grand scale (*Rājasūya*, *Vājapeya*, *Aśvamedha*, etc.) to display royal authority and solemnity. The two great Epics sing the exploits of the kṣatriyas during this time of kingship formation and development.

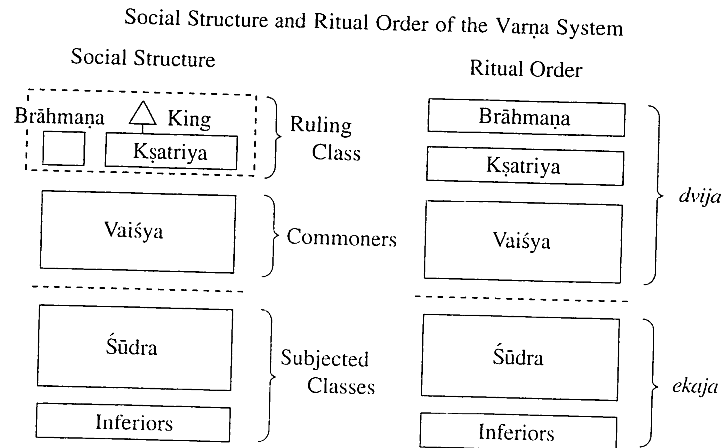
The fourth, śūdra varṇa, considered inferior to the three *dvija* varṇas, was formed from mainly indigenous people who had been conquered during the Aryan

[1] The origin of the word *kṣatriya* is explained in the *Mahābhārata* as "saving [the people] from destruction (*kṣatāt trāyati*) (XII, 29, 130; XII, 59, 128)." The Pāli Buddhist literature, as we will see, says the varṇa name originated from "landlords (*khettānaṃ pati*)"; and the *Mahāvastu* (I, 348) links it to "protecting (*rakṣati*)."

move into the Ganga basin. These four varṇas were not only differentiated according to occupation, but also arranged vertically into a ritual order headed by the brāhmaṇa varṇa. Then towards the end of the Later Vedic Age, another social stratum was formed below the śūdra varṇa made up of social inferiors including untouchables.[2]

During the Post-Vedic Age (c.600-c.320 BC), the rationale of the varṇa system was explained in systematic fashion by orthodox brāhmaṇa scholars in the *Dharmasūtras* they compiled. The accompanying diagram summarizes ideal varṇa society envisioned by these works.

Social Structure and Ritual Order of the Varṇa System



From the mid-Later Vedic Age onward, Aryans advanced into the middle and lower reaches of the Ganga, deepening their political, economic and cultural contacts with the forest-dwelling and rice cultivating indigenous populations there. The varṇa system also traveled east and played an important role in establishing political states and a more structured social order in the region. The sixth century BC saw the rise of the unorthodox ideas of Buddhism in this region in the midst of its urbanization. In the earliest Buddhist sources we discover aspects of the varṇa system in the east viewed from unorthodoxy. The present chapter will focus on the kṣatriya varṇa as a social class, described in the works of Hindu law, Buddhist sources and the *Arthaśāstra*.

[2] Concerning the formation of the varṇa system, see N. K. Dutt, *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, Vol. I. R. Thapar, *From Lineage to State, Social Formations in the Mid-First Millenium B.C. in the Ganga Valley*. B. K. Smith, *Classifying the Universe, The Varṇa System and the Origins of Caste*.

1. Kṣatriyas and Other Three Varṇas in the Works of Hindu Law

A. The Dharmasūtras

As the major sources to show how the members of varṇa society should live their lives in accordance with orthodox Brāhmaṇa principles, the *Dharmasūtras* contain a lot of items on kṣatriyas appearing together with other varṇas: that is, items that consider them as one of the four varṇas, those that consider them as one of the three *dvija* varṇas, those that consider them as one of the lower three varṇas apart from the brāhmaṇa varṇa, and those that consider them as a privileged class along with the brāhmaṇa varṇa.

To begin with, the *Vāsiṣṭha* explains how the four varṇas were created by Brahman.

> The Veda tells that the brāhmaṇa [was created from] His mouth, the *rājanya* from His arms, the vaiśya from His thighs, the śūdra from His feet (IV, 2).[3] The Veda tells that He created the brāhmaṇa along with the *Gāyatrī* [metre], the kṣatriya along with the Triṣṭubh [metre] and the vaiśya along with the Jagatī [metre]. Because He created the śūdra without any metre (*chandas*), they are not qualified to receive the sacraments (*saṃskāra*) (IV, 3).[4]

The first citation, which was first refered to in Vol. X of the *Ṛg Veda*, is the most commonly cited orthodox view of varṇa origins in the works of Hindu law. The idea that the kṣatriya originated from Brahman's arms symbolizes its strength, both political and military. Both citations also explain metaphorically the reason why kṣatriyas follow brāhmaṇas in the varṇa ritual order;[5] and the *Āpastamba* elucidates this latter point as follows:

> There are four varṇas, brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya and śūdra; among these, each preceeding [varṇa] is superior by birth to the following one (I, 1, 1, 3-4).

The following summarizes succinctly inter-varṇa occupational differences.

> A kṣatriya could overcome misfortune befallen on him by the strength of his arms; a vaiśya and a śūdra with their wealth; a brāhmaṇa, the highest ranking

[3] Also, *Manu*, I, 31, 87.

[4] These three metres are formed from 3 × 8 syllables, 4 × 11 syllables, and 4 × 12 syllables, respectively.

[5] There is also the explanation that brāhmaṇas were superior to kṣatriyas since the latter were born from the former. See p. 52 of this volume.

> among the three *dvija* varṇas, by praying in low voices and burning oblations.[6] For a brāhmaṇa, alms are another [legitimate source of income]; for a kṣatriya, the spoils of conquest; and for a vaiśya or a śūdra, the fruits of his labor (*Gaut.* X, 40-42).

The *Dharmasūtras* go on to describe the duties of kṣatriyas as "meting out justice and waging war" (*Āp.* II, 5, 10, 6), "protecting the people with weaponry" (*Vās.* II, 17), and "the military defense of the treasury and living beings" (*Baudh.* I, 10, 18, 3), in addition to their duties as a *dvija* varṇa: i.e., studying the Veda, doing Vedic rituals, and almsgiving.[7]

The duties of kṣatriyas (*kṣatradharma*) are described elaborately in the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana*, and there is plenty of detailed research on the subject.[8] In sum, the *kṣatradharma* consists of defending the people, providing for the welfare of brāhmaṇas, protecting the social order, acting on the side of justice, fighting courageously, and dying on the battlefield. The cruelty involved in the use of military force is legitimized by the *kṣatradharma*, and the purification of such actions is guaranteed through almsgiving and the sacrificial ceremonies.

The *Dharmasūtras* also describe the *kṣatradharma* succinctly, as seen in the following example.

> They should be experts in the use of the chariot and the bow and stand firm in battle, refusing to retreat. Even killing their enemies in battle is no crime for them. However, [they must never kill anyone] who loses his horses, charioteers or weapons, joins his hands in prayer [to beg for his life], musses his hair

[6] *Vās.* XXVI, 16. Also, *Manu*, XI, 34. The *Manu-smṛti* describes the superior quality of each as knowledge, courage, grain assets, and age, respectively (II, 155), and the ascetic pratice of each as the quest for knowledge, protection of the people, industry, and service, respectively (XI, 236).

[7] *Āp.* II. 5, 10, 4-7. *Gaut.* X, 1-3. *Vās.* II, 13-19. *Baudh.* I, 10, 18, 2-5. Also, *Manu*, I, 88-91; X, 79-80.

[8] M. Hara, "Kṣatra-Dharma: The Path of the Warrior in Ancient India," Parts I and II and Addenda (in Japanese), *Tōyō Gakuhō*, 51-2, 3, 4 (1968-69); pp. 1-31; 1-37; 1-10. Do., "The Literary and Martial Arts: Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas" (in Japanese), *Nihon Bukkyō-Gakkai Nenpō*, No. 36 (1970), pp. 1-31. In the former articles, the author utilizes the two great Epics to show that the duties of kṣatriyas were protecting the people, maintaining law and order, supporting brāhmaṇas, showing bravery in battle, etc. Terms used to characterize kṣatriyas include *vikrama* and *vīrya* (courage), *tejas* (dignity), *ojas* (vigor), *bala* (strength), *manyu* (anger) and *dhairya* (composure). For kṣatriyas, cruel, inhumane behavior was legitimized by the path of the warrior they followed. For them, war was their ultimate ritual and to display bravery in it was superior to religious ceremonies, almsgiving and asceticism and was thus the best means for acquiring honor, enjoying heaven and doing penance for their past sins.

> [running from battle], sits and turns his face away, has escaped into the hills or up a tree, is acting as a courier, or [begs for his life] by saying he is a brāhmaṇa or a cow.[9]

We also find various differences here and there among the four varṇas with respect to rules regarding ceremony and ritual. For example, in the daily purification practice of *ācamana* (scooping water into one's hand and sipping it), brāhmaṇas are purified by water that reaches their hearts, kṣatriyas by water that reaches their throats, vaiśyas by water that enters their mouths, śūdras and women by water that touches their lips.[10] The period of ritual impurity on the death of one's kin is ten days for brāhmaṇas, eleven for kṣatriyas, twelve or fifteen for vaiśyas, and a full month for śūdras, (ten, fifteen, twenty and a full month, according to another explanation).[11] Salutations also differ: brāhmaṇas inquiring about happiness, kṣatriyas about peace, vaiśyas about business conditions and śūdras about the health of those they meet.[12] The manner in which guests are received differs with respect to greetings, the order in which food is served, etc.[13] Intermarriage among the four varṇas was in principle prohibited, but as we have seen in earlier chapters, that taboo was often not observed in practice. Of the eight types of marriage, the *rākṣasa* type (abduction of a wife) was lawful only for kṣatriyas.[14]

Under the four stages of life, in general, a *dvija* male would be initiated around the age of ten and enter his student phase, studying the Veda under the tutelage of a brāhmaṇa; however, there were differences in student life depending on one's varṇa origin: for example, the age of initiation, clothing and other belongings, forms of salutation, and methods of mendicancy. As discussed in Chapter II, it is difficult to believe that the twelve years or more of study at the home of one's teacher required by the *Dharmasūtras* was normally met in the case of young kṣatriya men. What actually happened was probably after a nominal initiation ceremony (required of all male members of Aryan society), young kṣatriyas would then go on to study the martial arts and subjects of general education. The study of the Veda was only a part of that curriculum.[15]

[9] *Gaut.* X, 15-18. Also, *Āp.* II. 5, 10, 10-11. *Baudh.* I, 10, 18, 9-11. *Manu*, VII, 87-98.

[10] *Vās.* III, 31-34. *Baudh.* I, 5, 8, 23. Also, *Manu*, II, 62.

[11] *Gaut.* XIV, 1-5. *Vās.* IV, 26-29. In the *Manu-smṛti* (V, 83), 10, 12, 15 and 30 days, respectively.

[12] *Āp.* I, 4, 14, 26-29. *Gaut.* V, 41-42. Also, *Manu*, II, 127.

[13] *Āp.* II, 2, 4, 16-19. *Gaut.* V, 41-45. Also, *Manu*, III, 110-12.

[14] *Baudh.* I, 11, 20, 12. *Manu*, III, 23. M. Hara, "A Note on the Rākṣasa Form of Marriage," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 94 (1974), pp. 296-306. Also, see p. 7, note 6 of this volume.

[15] The *Mahābhārata* says that kṣatriya youths should first train in the martial arts, then engage in religious education. E. W. Hopkins, *The Social and Military Position of the Ruling Caste in Ancient India, as represented by the Sanskrit Epic*, (1st publ. 1889), 2nd repr.,

In the provisions dealing with statutory law, kṣatriyas are often listed along with other varṇas: for example, punishments to be meted out for slander, assault, murder, rape and theft, and civil regulations regarding interest, debt repayment and contract stipulations. In almost all of these provisions, kṣatriyas were given preferential treatment next to brāhmaṇas, as expected.

The differences in the ritual order between kṣatriyas and other varṇas are indicated in discrimination over provisions regarding murder. The murder of a kṣatriya was considered to be the secondary grievous crime (*upapātaka*), the worst being that of killing of a brāhmaṇa (*mahāpātaka*, i.e. great crime). The period of ascetic practices required for atonement in the killing of a brāhmaṇa was twelve years, eight for a kṣatriya, six for a vaiśya and three for a śūdra (12, 9, 3, 1 and 12, 6, 3, 1 according to other sources); however, the killing of a kṣatriya or vaiśya during a sacrificial ceremony was as ritually serious as the killing of a brāhmaṇa, and required the same period of atonement.[16] It is only natural that the brāhmaṇa compilers of the *Dharamasūtras* emphasize their superiority over the kṣatriya varṇa in the ritual order, but as we have seen, they also insist on the ideal relationship between the two being one of mutual respect for the rights of each in the performance of their duties.

B. The Dharmaśāstras

The *Manu-smṛti* deals with the *kṣatradharma* in a more systematic manner than the *Dharmasūtras*. For example,

> In battle, kings who fight with each other to their utmost ability and never turn their backs on the enemy will enter heaven [after death]... However, [any kṣatriya] who is killed in battle by his enemies in the course of trying to escape in fear will bring down on himself all of the sins of his lord. All the good deeds accumulated for the next life by one who is killed in the course of flight will accrue to his lord (VII, 89, 94-95).

Also, the use of such immoral, pernicious things as concealed and barbed weapons or poison darts and flaming arrows was prohibited (VII, 90).

We also discover that kings commanded their own professional military units and dispatched them to strategic points around their kingdoms (VII, 114), and military units protecting the capital would be reviewed daily by the king (VII, 222). These units were probably manned by kṣatriya soldiers. The *Manu-smṛti* also contains provisions concerning the appointment of government ministers and lower bureaucrats, and while they do not prescribe any varṇa qualifications, it is more probable than not that most were of brāhmaṇa and kṣatriya origin. One interesting

Varanasi, 1972, pp. 52-56.

[16] *Vās.* XX, 31-40. *Baudh.* II, 1, 1, 2&8-10. *Gaut.* XXII, 4, 14-16. *Manu*, XI, 73, 127-31.

item recommends that those originating from Kurukṣetra, Matsya, Pañcāla and Śūrasena be always placed in the vanguard marching into battle (VII, 193). These are places located in the upper reaches of the Ganga, the center of brāhmaṇa culture, and troops hailing from those regions were kṣatriyas more or less preserving the traditions of the varṇa system.

Among the provisions dealing with ceremony and ritual, kṣatriyas appear together with the other varṇas in many places. Here are a few examples of those not found in the *Dharamasūtras* (the descriptions in parentheses indicate varṇa order from brāhmaṇa on down): themes for naming children (first part: good omen, strength, wealth, repugnance; second part: good fortune, protection, prosperity, service); age for the hair clipping ceremony (*keśānta*) (16, 22, 24, na); direction of funeral procession from the city (east, north, west, south); what to touch at the ceremony marking the end of mourning (water, chariot or animal for riding and weapon, a cattle prod or halter, a staff);[17] what to swear upon before trial testimony (the truth, chariot or animal for riding and weapon, cow, seed or gold, all one's grievous offences).[18]

The last chapter of the *Manu-smṛti* touches upon the ritual place of kṣatriyas in the Universe. To begin with, it divides all of creation into the three categories of *sattva* (goodness), *rajas* (activity) and *tamas* (darkness), and then ranks each into three sub-categories. According to the list, many plants and animals are ranked at the lowest sub-category of *tamas*, while śūdras fall within its middle sub-category. Vaiśyas are found in the lowest sub-category of *rajas*, while the king, kṣatriyas and the *purohita* fall into its middle sub-category; and at the top there are *gandharvas* (gods of music) and *apsaras* (nymphs). Brāhmaṇas and mendicants occupy the lowest *sattva* sub-category, followed by gods and *ṛṣis*, then Brahman and Prajāpati in the highest of all.

The provisions concerning kṣatriyas in the later works of Hindu law, beginning with the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti*, do not differ much from their predecessors; however, the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* goes into more detail on a number of issues.[19] Also, in the *Nārada-smṛti* (V, 22-23) and the *Bṛhaspati-smṛti* (XVI, 8-10), we find warriors (*āyudhin*) occupying the top position among hired laborers (*bhṛtaka*).

In sum, the kṣatriya varṇa was entrusted by Hindu law with the role as the essential protectors of the people by means of politics and military force and was

[17] *Manu*, II, 31-32, 65; V, 92, 99.

[18] *Manu*, VIII, 113. A separate provision (VIII, 88) also requires that judges presiding over trials direct witnesses in different way according to their varṇas.

[19] Kṣatriyas rank next to brāhmaṇas in such provisions as how to deal with buried treasure (*Viṣ.* III, 56-61), rights of inheritance by mullato children (XVIII, 1-40), receiving unclean food from a man of different varṇa (XXII, 10-19), the term of impurity for the death or birth of a kinsman of different varṇa (XXII, 21-24), atonement for eating food leftover by a lower varṇa (LI, 50-56), and atonement for drinking impure water (LIV, 2-7).

placed second in the ritual order to brāhmaṇas. All of the provisions cited above are both ideal and stereotypical, and thus rather ambiguous about the real existence of kṣatriyas in ancient Indian society, since practice is always far more complicated than the ideal. There were certainly members of the kṣatriya varṇa who made their living in occupations other than politics and the military, while those who were involved in those latter occupations were not exclusively of kṣatriya origin. As we have noticed, under *āpaddharma* brāhmaṇas and vaiśyas could take up arms to defend themselves or to protect the ideals of varṇa society, and kṣatriyas could engage in such vaiśya occupations as agriculture, herding and commerce, and even in servile śūdra occupations. That is to say, Hindu orthodoxy was forced to grudgingly accept the fact that neither politics nor military action was being monopolized by the kṣatriya varṇa. In Indian history there did exist many dynasties of non-kṣatriya origin.

Among the non-Aryan peoples living on the periphery of varṇa society, there were those who moved into the central plains and established control there. On the other hand, there were those who adopted Aryan culture and the varṇa social order in their homelands. In order to win the favor of the leaders of these peoples and establish their religious authority among them, brāhmaṇas were willing to bestow upon them the rank of kṣatriya; and for this purpose they developed the idea of *vrātya*. Under this idea, non-Aryan peoples were said to be those of kṣatriya origin who had fallen to the status of śūdra because they did not perform the duties expected of kṣatriyas.[20] Accordingly, if they decided to follow orthodox teachings, they would be reinstated to kṣatriya status. It was in this way that the kṣatriya varṇa became a social stratum characterized by fuzzy boundaries and a flexible structure.

2. Buddhist Sources and the Arthaśāstra

A. The Buddhist Sources

The teachings of Gotama Buddha, who was born into a kṣatriya family, were supported by members of that varṇa in the states of the middle and lower reaches of the Ganga; i.e. northeastern India. As an unorthodox philosophy, Buddhism was bound to clash with orthodox brāhmaṇa ideas in the course of its development, and we have already seen in the previous chapter that the Buddhist literature placed kṣatriyas above brāhmaṇas in the social order. Also, contrary to the orthodox view of the divine origin of the four varṇas, Buddhists argued that they appeared in the course of human history accompanying the development of an occupational division of labor in society.

[20] *Manu*, X, 20-23, 43-44. Also, see pp. 5-6 of this volume.

> In primitive times humans were without desire and were at peace, but soon their desires grew and threw society into chaos. So they chose the most talented among them, bestowed kingship (the right to punish) on him and allowed him to tax them in exchange for protecting their lives and property. The first king of the human race was called Mahāsammata, meaning "he who was chosen by the consensus of the people." He was also called *khattiya* (*kṣatriya*), meaning "the lord of the arable (*khettānaṃ pati*)," and *rājā*, "he who makes people happy (*rañjeti*) by means of the law." Then came brāhmaṇas, those who train themselves and "who eliminate (*bāhenti*) bad laws," *vessas* (vaiśyas), "those involved in reputable (*vissuta*) occupations," and *suddas* (śūdras), "those occupied in hunting and menial (*khudda*) tasks."[21]

As discussed in the previous chapter, the Buddhist literature continuously ranks kṣatriyas and brāhmaṇas over the other varṇas and emphasizes that being born into those superior varṇas is the result of good *karma* in one's previous life.[22] It therefore follows that all of those who attained buddhahood before Gotama belonged to either of those two varṇas. The first twenty-one past Buddhas, beginning with Dīpaṅkara, were all of kṣatriya origin, while the next three, Kakusandha, Koṇāgamana, and Kassapa, were brāhmaṇas.[23] The fact that the present day Buddha, Gotama, was kṣatriya was proof of that varṇa being the highest ranked at the time.[24] As we have seen, in contrast to what may be the imagination of his followers on this point, Gotama Buddha himself refuted the idea of varṇa discrimination based on "birth."

Buddhist scripture also states the following about kṣatriya pride being equal to that of brāhmaṇas.

> The kṣatriya is one who can trace his pedigree back over seven generations of pure kṣatriya blood on both his father and mother's sides.[25]

The fact that kṣatriyas were strongly conscious of their varṇa is evidenced by a conversation between a man and woman that appears in one *Jātaka* story, in which they verify their social status by chanting together a kṣatriya incantation.[26] The *Jātakas* also tell us that there were those kṣatriyas who traveled far (particularly to Taxila) to study and acquire not only knowledge of the Veda, but also artistic and techni-

[21] *DN*. III, pp. 84-95. Also see pp. 109-10 of this volume.
[22] For example, *Apadāna*, II, pp. 443, 457, 464, 480, 503, 526, etc.
[23] *DN*. II, pp. 2-3. *J*. I, pp. 2-44. *Buddhavaṃsa*, pp. 1-69.
[24] *DN*. I, pp. 87-99; III, pp. 97-98. *SN*. I, p. 153. *J*. I, p. 49.
[25] *VP*. IV, p. 160. cf. *MN*. II, pp. 166-67.
[26] *J*. IV, p. 231.

cal skills.[27] However, as discussed in the preceding section, those who actually spent the amount of time in study required by Hindu law were few and far between. The essential education of kṣatriyas involved imparting knowledge about how to use elephants, horses, chariots and swords on the battlefield,[28] and the accouterments that symbolized their existence were the bow and quiver.[29] Against the orthodox brāhmaṇa notion that in order for kṣatriyas to attain heaven it was necessary for them to purify themselves by dying on the battlefield, one Buddhist source argues to the contrary that anyone who dies in battle is bound for hell.[30] Furthermore, kṣatriyas were actually feared by the common people, as evidenced by the Buddhist saying that of the things that should never be taken lightly, even in their infancy, are snakes, fire, *bhikkhus* and kṣatriyas (especially royalty).[31]

B. Gaṇa-saṅgha

One way of discovering the kind of people who made up the kṣatriya varṇa is to consider two political phenomena that existed in northeastern India at the time of the earliest Buddhist writings: tribal republics and monarchies.

Those polities characterized by the former were called *gaṇa* or *saṅgha*, meaning "group" or "community," in the sense of obligarchy, aristocracy and republic.[32] I myself prefer the term "tribal republic." These polities did not possess a monarch, but were rather governed by a group of persons referred to as "kṣatriyas" or "*rājās*." Those cited in the Buddhist literature geographically ranged from the northern bank of the Ganga to the hills at the foot of the Himalayas. According to the *Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta*, of the eight countries which vied to obtain the Buddha's funereal ashes, seven were tribal republics, the monarchy of Magadha being the exception.[33] They were the Licchavis (of Vesāli), the Sākiyas (of Kapilavatthu), the Bulis (of Allakappa), the Koliyas (of Rāmagāma), the Mallas (of Pāvā), the other Mallas (of Kusinārā), and the Moriyas (of Pippalivana). All of them argued, "The Blessed One was kṣatriya and so are we. Therefore we are entitled to a portion of his ashes." According to a later legend, several of these peoples boasted lineages from kṣatriyas of western origins. For example, the Sākiyas, from whom the Buddha

[27] *J.* I, pp. 259-61, 272-75; II, pp. 2-5, 39, 277, 319, 427-29, etc.

[28] While recognizing that the martial arts did comprise a discipline, the Buddha considered it inferior to the study of his teachings. *AN.* III, p. 327.

[29] *MN.* II, p. 180.

[30] *SN.* V, pp. 308-11.

[31] *SN.* I, p. 69. The *Manu-smṛti* (IV, 135-36) states that kṣatriyas, snakes and highly knowledgeable brāhmaṇas should never be ridiculed.

[32] Regarding this type of polity, see B. C. Law, *Kṣatriya Clans in Buddhist India*, Calcutta, 1922. J. P. Sharma, *Republics in Ancient India, c. 1500 B.C. —500 B.C.*, Leiden, 1968. R. Thapar, *op. cit.*

[33] *DN.* II, pp. 164-68.

himself originated, claimed that they were descendents of King Okkāka (Ikṣvāku), who belonged to the bloodline of Mahāsammata, the first king in human history, while the Koliyas said they descended from one of the daughters of Okkāka and the king of Benares (Bārāṇasī). The Licchavis were said to have descended from either Okkāka or the royal family of Benares.[34] Furthermore, they all fancied themselves as pure-blooded kṣatriyas and scoffed at lineages they considered of lesser origin. It is said that when the Sākiyas were subjugated by the king of Kosala, he asked them to send him one of their daughters to be his queen. Outraged at the fact of having a daughter of theirs marry a kṣatriya of inferior blood, the Sākiyas decided to send instead the daughter of a female slave, whose father was a tribal leader. The son of that woman, Viḍūḍabha, was to be shunned and looked down upon by the Sākiyas in later years, an act which eventually led to the downfall of the Sākiya tribal republic. While the historical facts surrounding such a tradition are not clear, it is interesting to note a caste-like exclusivity characterizing those groups who ruled tribal republics.[35]

All of the *gaṇa-saṅgha* states were small-scale polities, with a few exceptions, and their political, economic and cultural activities centered around public halls (*santhāgāra*) located in their cities and towns. The elite kṣatriyas would frequently hold gatherings there to discuss various problems in the community, stage martial arts contests, and invite religious leaders, like the Buddha himself, to preach sermons.[36] It appears that these unscheduled gatherings did, however, follow a certain protocol, well developed enough to have influenced the rules of the *khandhaka* part of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* governing Buddhist *saṅgha*.[37] According to the later annotations, the judicial procedures followed by the Licchavis were very involved, requiring seven stages of deliberation and judgement in order to convict the accused.[38] Of course, this is probably not historically accurate, but it does provide an interesting insight into the character of *gaṇa-saṅgha* republics.

The kṣatriya tribes themselves were more than likely stratified, the leaders of the *santhāgāras* being chosen from their highest stratum (or inheriting the position) and dividing up administrative duties among themselves.[39] The stronger the bonds

[34] See note 32.

[35] Rhys Davids says that the legend of Viḍūḍabha's revenge is not true, and argues that the subjugation and downfall of the Sākiyas was the result of territorial expansion by Kosala, i.e. Viḍūḍabha's ambition. T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, London, 1903, pp. 10-12.

[36] *VP.* I, p. 233. *MN.* I, p. 457. *AN.* IV, pp. 179-80. *J.* IV, p. 147: *SN.* V, p. 453: *DN.* III, pp. 207-09. *MN.* I, pp. 353-54.

[37] K. P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*, Fourth ed., Bangalore, 1968, pp. 40-48, 86-97. S. Mukerji, *The Republican Trends in Ancient India*, Delhi, 1969, pp. 148-63.

[38] W. Stede ed., *The Sumaṅgala-vilāsinī*, Vol. II, London, 1931, p. 519.

[39] See J. P. Sharma, *op. cit.* J. C. Hessterman argues that there was no substantial difference between republics and monarchies, but that it was rather a question of degree. *The Inner Conflict of Tradition*, Chicago, 1985, pp. 108, 146-48.

holding members of these tribal states together, the stronger their military capabilities. It is said that the Buddha cited the following seven conditions which kept these states strong.[40]

(1) Holding frequent meetings where many people gather together.
(2) Acting in concert.
(3) Adhering to traditional laws and not revising them frivolously.
(4) Respecting their elders and listening to their counsel.
(5) Not treating their women coercively or violently.
(6) Honoring their shrines (*cetiya*) with continuous offerings.
(7) Welcoming the enlightened (*arahant*) and protecting them.

Therefore, in order to weaken one of these states, it was necessary to sever their intertribal bonds. According to one legend, the Licchavis, who were particularly proud of their strength, declined and fell as a result of efforts by neighboring Magadha to stir up internal disturbances.[41]

The *Arthaśāstra*, said to be authored by Kauṭilya, discusses "*saṅgha* states" in the same vein as the *gaṇa-saṅgha* described in the Buddhist literature, devoting its eleventh chapter to them. It too argues that the strength of such states arises out of tribal solidarity, and that kings can find valuable allies among such polities, as well as vicious enemies. The best way to weaken *saṅgha* states is to cause discord among their ruling elites, and some related methods are suggested (XI, 1, 1-56). As to the actual *saṅgha* states mentioned in the *Arthaśāstra*,

> The kṣatriya communities (*śreṇī*) of Kamboja, Surāṣṭra, etc. live by enterprise (agriculture, herding and commerce) and the sword. The Liccivikas, Vṛjikas, Mallakas, Madrakas, Kukuras, Kurus, Pañcālas, etc. live by calling themselves *rājās* (XI, 1, 4-5).[42]

Here we find some kṣatriyas involved in traditional vaiśya occupations in times of peace. Among those who were living by virtue of their kṣatriya social position were the Licchavis, Mallas and Vṛjis who were famous kṣatriya tribes of northeastern India during the Buddha's time, and the Kurus and Pañcālas were traditional kṣatriya tribes of the upper Ganga basin. Incidentally, the Licchavis and Mallas,

[40] *DN*. II, pp. 73-75. *AN*. IV, pp. 16-21.
[41] W. Stede, *op. cit.*, pp. 522-24. B. C. Law, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-35.
[42] "*Kāmboja - Surāṣṭra - kṣatriya- śreṇyādayo...*" Kangle's translation is "The Kāmbojas, the Surāṣṭras, the Kṣatriyas, the Śreṇīs and others..." R. P. Kangle, *The Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra*, Part II, p. 526.

who were located in centers of unorthodoxy, are referred to in the *Manu-smṛti* as inferior (*vrātya*) kṣatriyas.

C. Gaṇa-saṅgha States and the Varṇa System

The *gaṇa-saṅgha* states that existed in northeastern India during the Buddha's lifetime possessed unique structures in terms of the varṇa system they introduced. To begin with, the role played by the brāhmaṇas there was relatively limited. Although brāhmaṇas were indeed active in these states, they did not play their normally diversified role in maintaining the social order. This is suggested by the statement in the Buddhist sources that the Sākiyas did not honor, respect, worship or support brāhmaṇas,[43] and the description that most of the "brāhmaṇa villages" were situated in such kingdoms as Kosala and Magadha.[44] The kṣatriyas of the *gaṇa-saṅgha* states utilized the varṇa system idealized by orthodox Brāhmaṇas to protect their own social exclusivity. In general, the most popular religious beliefs in those states were such indigenous, non-orthodox practices as serpent and tree worship and *caitya* (*cetiya*) offerings.

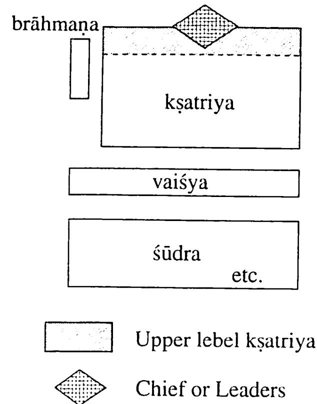
The second point is the similarly small roles played by vaiśyas and śūdras in these states. While the situation among the Licchavis based in the large city of Vesāli is not clear, it is quite probable that the kṣatriyas among the Sākiyas and other smaller states were landholders engaged in cultivation during times of peace.[45] There is the account of an influential Sākiya leader, Mahānāma, being kept busy in the supervision of cultivation, and the story of the Buddha's own father manning a plow during the yearly sowing ceremony (*vappamaṅgala*).[46] Although we find accounts of Sākiya kṣatriya members hiring labor and owning slaves,[47] the śūdra varṇa there was much smaller proportionately than in larger kingdoms. All of this is merely conjecture, of course, since there are no sources to verify these stories.

Due to the commercial underdevelopment of the *gaṇa-saṅgha* states, it is doubtful that vaiśyas played much of a social or economic role there. Rather, as we have seen above, the kṣatriya tribespeople may have been the most active in the production sphere. The *Arthaśāstra* supports such a view in its suggestion that when conquering a *gaṇa-saṅgha* state, the king should put kṣatriyas to the work of

[43] *DN*. I, pp. 91-92.
[44] N. Wagle, *Society at the Time of the Buddha*, pp. 18-19.
[45] U. Chakravarti insists that in *gaṇa-saṅgha* states private ownership of land was still undeveloped and land was communally held by kṣatriya clan members. *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism*, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 87-89, 91-92.
[46] *VP*. II, pp. 180-81: *J*. I, pp. 57-58.
[47] There are accounts of slaves rebelling and taking to the forests and attacking women (*VP*. IV, pp. 181-82); of male and female slaves (*dāsa-dāsī*), hired laborers (*kammakara*), and servants (*sevaka*) being employed among the Sākiyas and Koliyas (*J*. V, pp. 412-13); slaves and servants of the Sākiyas being dressed up during the festival (*J*. I, p. 57).

reclaiming and colonizing arable land in groups of five or ten families (XI, 1, 17). In sum, the social structure of *gaṇa-saṅgha* states in terms of varṇas can be illustrated in the accompanying diagram.

Social Structure of the *Gaṇa-saṅgha* State



In the larger *gaṇa-saṅgha* states located on the banks of the Ganga, the vaiśya and śūdra strata were probably more developed, and thus the role played by kṣatriyas in production proportionately smaller. For example, the phrase "7707 *rājās* (i.e. a great number of *rājās*) resided in the Licchavi city of Vesāli,"[48] means that their economic needs must have put quite a burden on the labor of vaiśyas and śūdras than in smaller tribal states.

Despite the fact that the kṣatriyas of the *gaṇa-saṅgha* states of the northeast during the Buddha's lifetime claimed that they originated in the west, scholars of today are divided over whether they were in fact Aryans who migrated east or Aryanized indigenous people. Based on the fact that such states were incubators for non-Brahmanist religious beliefs and ideas and the general historical development of the region (to be discussed next), it is my opinion that the kṣatriyas in most of these states originated from local tribes who came to power in each region.

The Aryan tribes who did move into the upper reaches of the Ganga were already socially stratified; and while preserving some tribal remnants, displayed a tendency towards expanding kingship. The states formed by the Aryans who later advanced east can be thought to be an extention of this tendency, in the fact that they actually did form kingdoms, like Kosala, Kāsi and Magadha. The idea that those peoples who did in fact migrate east formed many *gaṇa-saṅgha* states con-

[48] *J.* III, p. 1.

tradicts such a natural historical and political development.[49] Archeological studies have proved that rice cultivation was being carried out in northeastern India before the Aryan advance into the region. Therefore, it is very likely that leading tribes among the indigenous people who were cultivating rice embarked on primitive state building by introducing Aryan culture and setting themselves up as a kṣatriya ruling class. The practice among the Licchavis and Sākiyas of using brāhmaṇa-like *gotra* (exogamous sept) names like Vāsiṣṭha and Gautama was no doubt to show their "Aryanization" rather than any Aryan (western) racial origins. These leading indigenous tribes introduced the varṇa system in mutated form and resisted recognizing the superiority of the brāhmaṇa varṇa, supporting unorthodox ideas and beliefs like Buddhism. On the other hand, orthodox brāhmaṇas did not recognize the leaders of *gaṇa-saṅgha* states as bona-fide kṣatriyas, treating them as "heretical" or "fallen."

D. Kṣatriyas in Kingdoms

Of the Sixteen *Mahājanpadas* kingdoms of Magadha, Kosala, Vatsa and Avanti were the most powerful. They were ruled by monarchs who called themselves kṣatriyas and were propped up by standing armies and administrative bureaucracies. For example, in the previously mentioned dispute over the distribution of the Buddha's funereal ashes, out of resistance to other *gaṇa-saṅgha* kṣatriyas, the king of Magadha, Ajātaśatru, argued, "The Blessed One was a kṣatriya and I am kṣatriya. Therefore, I am entitled to a portion of his remains."[50] Also when Prasenajit, the king of Kosala, who prided himself in being a full-fledged kṣatriya,[51] discovered that the woman sent to him by the Sākiyas to be his queen was a daughter of a slave woman, he became worried that the son she bore, Viḍūḍabha, would not be able to accede to the throne as a kṣatriya.[52]

The monarchs of these kingdoms surrounded themselves with many kṣatriya retainers (*khattiya-anuyutta*), in addition to the ministers, brāhmaṇas and well-to-do commoners (*gahapati*) in their entourages.[53] There is also one Buddhist account of a king having 84,000 kṣatriya retainers, including a generalissimo (*parināyaka*).[54]

[49] There is the case of the Videha kingdom reverting to a tribal republic. J. P. Sharma, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-58. They may have been Aryan settlers who established a monarchy on the periphery, but after the royal family was deposed for some reason (internal rebellion, foreign war, etc.), the Videhans seemed to have been influenced by neighboring tribal states and adopted their institutions.

[50] *DN.* II, p. 164.

[51] *MN.* II, pp. 121, 124.

[52] *J.* I, pp. 133-34; IV, pp. 147-48.

[53] There are many references to this, a few examples of which are *DN.* I, pp. 136-42. *SN.* I, pp. 58-59. *J.* I, p. 470; IV, pp. 192, 317.

[54] *DN.* II, pp. 188, 191, 193.

We also find kṣatriya retainers living in towns and villages.[55] The major difference between these kṣatriyas and those of the *gaṇa-saṅgha* states is that the latter were actually tribal members, while the former were retainers in service to their lords under some kind of contractual relationship. The kings who ruled during the age of the warlords sought the most militarily skillful retainers possible, regardless of their native place, tribe or the varṇa to which they belonged. One Buddhist source states,

> Anyone well-trained and brave enough to stand firm upon the outbreak of a vicious battle would be made a royal retainer, regardless of whether he were a kṣatriya, brāhmaṇa, vaiśya, or śūdra. A coward with no military prowess would never be employed, no matter how noble his birth.[56]

Similar accounts in the *Jātakas* include:

(1) Complaints from the royal archers when an archer from a distant land was hired by the king for 10,000 cash.[57]
(2) Rivalry breaking out in a royal army between veterans (*porāṇakayodha*) and new recruits from foreign lands (*āgantuka*).[58]
(3) A brāhmaṇa skilled in archery and his stand-in, a weaver, displaying their skills to a king and being made royal retainers.[59]

Another, rather far-fetched, story concerns a band of crooked ascetics who were given weapons and shields and made royal retainers as punishment for their vices.[60] On the other hand, there are accounts of kṣatriyas involved in such occupations as commerce, agriculture, handicrafts and manual labor.[61]

It was in this way that during the formation era of kingdoms in the northeast the varṇa system was implemented in a relaxed manner, with kṣatriyas playing the major role in politics and war, but by no means monopolizing that role. The historians are divided over whether or not kṣatriyas at that time formed an endogamous caste organization.[62] However, any discussion should begin by first distinguishing

[55] *DN*. I, pp. 136-37.
[56] *SN*. I, pp. 98-100.
[57] *J*. II, pp. 87-88.
[58] *J*. III, p. 400.
[59] *J*. I, pp. 356-57.
[60] *J*. IV, p. 304. There is a provision in Hindu law stipulating that those who abandon their vows of renunciation are to be made the king's slaves for life. *Yāj*. II, 183. *Viṣ*. V, 152. *Nār*. V, 35.
[61] *J*. IV, pp. 84, 168-69; V, pp. 290-93; VI, p. 34.
[62] R. Fick, *The Social Organisation in North-East India in Buddha's Time*, pp. 79-82. B. C. Law, *op. cit*., pp. 10-11. H. Oldenberg, "On the History of the Indian Caste System," *The Indian Antiquary*, XLIX (1920), p. 227.

between the kṣatriyas of the *gaṇa-saṅgha* republics and their counterparts active in kingdoms; the former indeed possessed a highly exclusionary tribal character, while the latter did not, being characterized by more flexibility and diversity.

The kind of society that the *Arthaśāstra* considers ideal is one divided along the lines of the four varṇa system, in which kṣatriyas "live by the sword" and "protect living beings" (I, 3, 4-8). In its multi-faceted discussion of bureaucrats and soldiers who support monarchies, first, there is no mention of from what varṇas administrators should hail. In the case of a minister of state, "he should be of good birth (*abhijāta*)," which probably means born from upstanding kṣatriya or brāhmaṇa families. Regarding the military, it is suggested that the major part should consist of kṣatriya members (VI, 1, 11), but elsewhere a different, rather interesting view is delivered, criticizing those political experts who insist that the higher the varṇa composition, the better the military unit.

> By prostration the enemy may win over an army made up of brāhmaṇas. An army made up of kṣatriyas well-trained in the use of weapons is better. A vaiśya or a śūdra army, when possessed of great strength [is better than a brāhmaṇa army] (IX, 2, 23-24).

Thus, the author of the *Arthaśāstra* recognizes it only natural that the military be partly composed of the members of varṇas other than kṣatriyas. R. P. Kangle is therefore correct when stating that while the major component of any standing army was well-trained kṣatriyas, due to limitations in their numbers, the ranks of troops actually necessary to go into battle were probably filled by vaiśya and śūdra (especially śūdra) recruits.[63]

During the time when the Mauryan Dynasty was carrying on empire building (c.300 BC), its capital of Pāṭaliputra was visited by a Greek, Megasthenes, who reports the existence of seven caste-like classes (*genos, meros*) in India at that time, each with a traditional occupation and marrying within its class. He has the following to say about the warrior class.

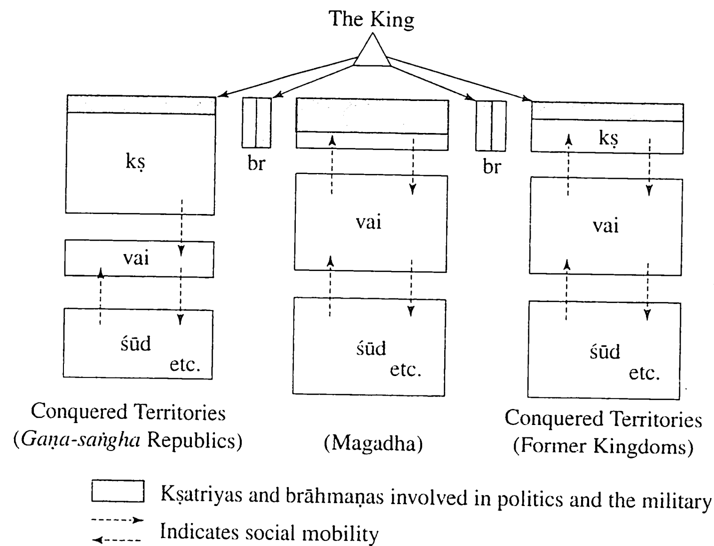
> The warriors are the most populated next to the cultivators, and form a caste-like class. It is well-organized and stands constantly battle-ready. Its members are engaged in no other occupation than warfare. In time of peace they spend a life of leisure, drinking and carousing. Each warrior has an entourage of squires that serves him on the battlefield. Warriors receive large stipends from

[63] R. P. Kangle, *op. cit*., Part III, p. 245. In addition to the soldiers and their attendants at the front, there were also manual laborers, merchants, prostitutes, hunters and intelligence agents active in military camps (*Arth*. X, 1, 6-11).

the state and live affluent lives. The weapons, equipment, horses and elephants they use in battle are the property of the king and are returned to the royal storehouse and stables when the war has ended.[64]

It would be correct to identify these professional warriors as kṣatriyas hailing from different locations and different tribes; and while the accounts of Megasthenes do jump to conclusions at times and lead to misunderstanding, his observation of a single caste-like class of warriors existing in India at that time is an important bit of information. The accompanying diagram sums up the relationship between varṇas and the state structure of the Magadha kingdom.

Relationship between Varṇas and the State Structure of the Magadha Kingdom



Kṣatriyas and brāhmaṇas involved in politics and the military

Indicates social mobility

Conclusions

In the above discussion we have found that the kṣatriya varṇa was a fairly ambiguous social class in ancient India; nevertheless it took on at least the following three forms during the two or three centuries between the rise of Buddhism and the formation of the Mauryan empire.

[64] J. W. McCrindle tr., *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, rev. 2nd ed., Calcutta, 1960, pp. 40, 85, 89, 217.

The first was inherited from the Later Vedic Age and existed in the upper reaches of the Ganga, where the early varṇa system was still relatively well intact. It consisted of aristocrats and warriors organized into a fairly developed endogamous group, proud of its Aryan heritage, claiming legitimacy to rule over the region, and supported by orthodox brāhmaṇas, who were being protected by these kṣatriyas. As time went on, a political gap would develop and continue to widen between those kṣatriyas who became kings and those who did not, but they would still be bound together by the same genealogical consciousness. It was the kṣatriya varṇa of the social structure shown in the diagram on page 64.[65]

The second form existed in *gaṇa-saṅgha* republics (see the diagram on page 76) of northeastern India, whose ruling tribal members called themselves kṣatriyas. The influence exerted by brāhmaṇas in these polities was comparatively weak and the strata occupied by vaiśyas and śūdras not very populous. The varṇa system was introduced into their societies in a mutated form different from the orthodox ideal, in which kṣatriyas were the most exclusionary of the three forms. One more feature is that the claim by these rulers that they were pure-blooded kṣatriyas was not recognized by the orthodox brāhmaṇas of the upper Ganga basin.

The third form appeared in the middle and lower reaches of the Ganga, displaying a fairly flexible varṇa framework characterizing the kingdoms established there (see the diagram on page 80). The monarchs of these polities, their military retainers and a portion of the bureaucracies referred to themselves as kṣatriyas. Freed from the constraints of tribal society, kṣatriyas of these kingdoms were fairly open social groups. Kṣatriyas of the former *gaṇa-saṅgha* republics continued to call themselves such, while at the same time new political leaders (groups) rose up, also calling themselves kṣatriyas and forming an elite class with the support of brāhmaṇas who pandered to their claims. In these kingdoms, members of other varṇas were also recruited into their armies; and again the orthodox brāhmaṇas of the upper Ganga criticized the upstarts in these regions as "self-imposed" and "decadent" kṣatriyas.

During the rise of Buddhism, all three of these forms of kṣatriya varṇa existed side by side in the Ganga basin. With the development of states adopting the third form in the lower Ganga basin, polities characterized by the first two forms were gradually conquered, the transformation finally being completed by the Nanda

[65] That the varṇa system remained fairly intact in the Kuru and the Pañcāla countries located in the heart of orthodox Brahmanism can be assumed from the following points: (1) society remained mainly agrarian and conservative with slow urban development, (2) compared to Magadha in the mid- and lower Ganga basin, despotic kingship remained underdeveloped, (3) brāhmaṇa culture remained deep-rooted, (4) the *Manu-smṛti and* the *Arthaśāstra* describe such kṣatriya groups as the Kurus and Pañcālas as still existing there, (5) the orthodox brāhmaṇa sources decry the destruction of true kṣatriyas of this region at the hand of the Nanda Dynasty of Magadha.

Dynasty about the middle of the fourth century BC. The *Purāṇas* criticize the founder of that Dynasty, Mahāpadma, as of śūdra origin uprooting the whole kṣatriyas, and lament the end of dynasties of orthodox kṣatriya origins.[66] Actually, the second form of kṣatriyas continued to hold on to its close tribal ties in some parts of northern India, while the powerful kṣatriya dynasties that appeared after the Nandas and Mauryas were either (1) those formed by influential families looked upon region-by-region as descended from kṣatriyas; (2) those formed by upstarts recognized as kṣatriyas by brāhmaṇas who pandered to them, and (3) those formed by upstarts who called themselves kṣatriyas without any brāhmaṇa legitimization.

Although the actual substance of the kṣatriya varṇa remained ambiguous, there is no doubt that kṣatriya ideals continued throughout ancient times as an important means for legitimizing kingship and the right to govern. We also observe a powerful group, once recognized as originating from the kṣatriya varṇa, beginning to form a privileged caste-like organization and becoming an enthusiastic supporter of the varṇá social order.

[66] F. E. Pargiter, *The Purāṇa Text of the Dynasties of the Kali Age,* 2nd ed., Varanasi, 1962, pp. 25, 69.

Chapter V
KINGSHIP IN THE WORKS OF HINDU LAW

In ancient India, there was the view that kingdoms consisted of seven essential elements (*sapta-prakṛtayaḥ*) or were supported by seven "limbs" (*sapta-aṅgāni*). According to the *Manu-smṛti* (IX, 294), these are the king (*svāmin*), his ministers (*amātya*), the capital city (*pura*), the whole territory (*rāṣṭra*), the treasury (*kośa*), the militia (*daṇḍa*), and any kingdom's allies (*suhṛd, mitra*).[1] While each element has its own character and purpose, the earlier element is more important and becomes the source of more serious disasters (IX, 295-97). That is to say, the state was thought to function like a living body made up of vital organs working in unique ways, the king being the most important in determining the fate of the whole body.

In the present chapter, I intend to utilize the works of Hindu law as part of a quest to examine how kingship was conceptualized in ancient India. These sources refer to kingdoms (*rājya*), and exclude the *gaṇa-saṅgha* states discussed in the previous chapter.

1. The Function of the King

A. The Dharmasūtras

The *Gautama* sums up the function and role of kings as follows:

> The protection of all living beings is for the king [a special duty] added [to studying the Veda, offering Vedic rituals for himself and almsgiving]. Meting out lawful punishment for crimes [is another kingly duty]. He is obliged to support the learned brāhmaṇas, non-brāhmaṇas with little wherewithal [to earn a living], those who are exempt from taxes (widows, orphans and ascetics, etc.) and students [learning under a teacher for a fixed term]. He should strive for victory in battle, especially when threatened [by enemies], [be skilled in] the chariot and the bow, stand firm in the field and never retreating (X, 7-16).

For the king, such protection of living beings and his subjects was to be done, first

[1] *Rāṣṭra* includes the people within its boundaries as well. The *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* (I, 352) lists the people (*jana*) and the castle town (*durga*) as third and fourth, the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* (III, 33) lists the castle town, the treasury, the militia and the whole territory as third, fourth, fifth and sixth, and the *Arthaśāstra* (VI, 1, 1) lists the province (*janapada*) and the castle town as third and fourth.

and foremost, in accordance with the *dharma*, beginning with the *varṇa-āśrama-dharma*. The sources of the *dharma* were first the Veda, followed by the traditions and the virtuous conduct of those who know them, and the customs of learned and virtuous men.[2] In the absence of these attributes, the decisions of a council (*pariṣad*) consisting of at least ten learned brāhmaṇas or the counsel of five, three or even one impeccable brāhmaṇa would determine what was and was not in accordance with the *dharma*.[3] The *dharma* was also explained as what the devout and virtuous *āryas* (*dvijas*) praise, and those criticized by them were said to be unrighteous (*adharma*).[4] This kind of relationship between kings and brāhmaṇas has already been discussed in Chapter III, but to sum up here, it was the cooperation between the two that would result in both prosperity and security for the state and people.[5]

Besides the *varṇa-āśrama-dharma*, the *dharma* pertaining to the king as protector can be found in customary laws handed down by local people, kinship groups and families; kings were required to respect those customs.[6] The *Dharmasūtras* also say that kings who rule properly are entitled to one-sixth of the merit earned by the people.[7] Furthermore, kings who performed their duty to protect the people also had the right to tax them, but this point will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.

Kings were assisted by brāhmaṇas, beginning with their *purohitas*, in ceremonial events aimed at bringing about prosperity, fertility and victory in war, bringing enemies to their knees and preventing disasters.[8] The role of the king as the host (*yajamāna*) of these events for "national" purposes was thus one link in the chain for protecting the people. Kings were expected to follow the advice of those who knew about providence and omens (i.e. fortune tellers).[9] However, we find little concern in the *Dharmasūtras* about deifying kingship.

B. The Manu-smṛti

At the stage of the *Manu-smṛti* we find the discourse becoming more detailed about the functions of the king, and going as far as to conclude that kings have a divine existence created from the essence of the eight gods, and act on their behalf here on earth. It is explained that in antiquity Prajāpati, the creator, looked down upon the chaos the world had fallen into, and in order to protect all living beings, drew

[2] *Āp.* I, 1, 1, 1-2. *Gaut.* I, 1-2. *Vās.* I, 4-7. *Baudh.* I, 1, 1, 1-6. See also *Manu*, II, 6-13.
[3] *Baudh.* I, 1, 1, 7-9. See also *Gaut.* XXVIII, 48-51. *Vās.* III, 7, 20.
[4] *Āp.* I, 7, 20, 6-8; II, 11, 29, 14.
[5] For examble, *Āp.* II, 5, 11, 1-4&10-11. *Gaut.* VIII, 1-3; XI, 9-14, 25-32. *Vās.* I, 39-41; XIX, 1-2, 7-8.
[6] *Gaut.* XI, 20-22. *Vās.* I, 17; XIX, 7. *Āp.* II, 6, 15, 1. See also *Manu*, VIII, 41-42, 46, 219-21. *Yāj.* I, 342, 360; II, 192. *Nār.* X, 1-2. *Bṛh.* II, 28.
[7] *Gaut.* XI, 11. See also *Manu*, VIII, 304-05.
[8] *Gaut.* XI, 12-14, 17-18.
[9] *Gaut.* XI, 15-16.

eight eternal elements (*śāśvatī-mātrā*) from the gods and created a king. As to the relationship between the functions of the eight gods and kingship we find the following explanation.[10]

1. The king is to benefit his kingdom like Indra blesses living beings with rain during the four-month long monsoon.
2. The king is to levy taxes on his kingdom gradually like Āditya (Arka), the sun god, takes eight months to dry the standing water with his rays.
3. The king is to penetrate everywhere through his intelligence agents, like the ever presence of Māruta (Anira, Vāyu), the god of wind.
4. The king is to rule his subjects equally like Yama, the god of death, who chooses the time to die without preference.
5. The king is to punish criminals like Varuṇa, the god of water and jurisprudence, captures and binds them.
6. The king is to make his subjects happy like a full moon (moon god Candra, Soma) gladdens men who see it.
7. The king is to burn and destroy with his powerful energy wrongdoers and corrupt retainers, like Agni, the fire god.
8. The king is to foster and support all living beings like Pṛthivī, the earth goddess, nurtures them with equality.[11]

The *Manu-smṛti* also compares the relationship between the king and his subjects to the parent-child relationship (VII, 80), while warning that any king who fails to protect his subjects is "the same as being dead" (VII, 143-44). It also states that any king convicted of a crime is to be fined 1000 times that of a commoner who commits the same crime (VIII, 336). Political action contrary to the *dharma* will lead to the fall of kings.

> The king who ignores the law, refuses to believe in the gods, wallows in greed, and does not protect the people but devours them, will be condemned to hell (VIII, 309).
> The king who inflicts pain on his kingdom out of stupidity or carelessness will before long lose his kingdom and his life together with his relatives. The life of the king who inflicts pain on his kingdom will be destroyed like lives of living beings are destroyed by tormenting their bodies (VII, 111-12).

[10] *Manu*, V, 96; VII, 2-7, 35; IX, 303-11. Differences exist in the names of the gods and their order. For example, the god of wealth, Vittapati/Vitteśa (Kubera) sometimes replaces Pṛthivī, the goddess of the earth.
[11] The *Nārada-smṛti* likens the king's anger to Agni, his military prowess to Indra, his warmness to Soma, his punishment to Yama and his largess to Kubera (XVIII, 26-32).

Also listed are legendary kings who fell due to insolence: Vena, Nahuṣa, Sudās, Sumukha, and Nimi (VII, 41).

In addition to the three sources of the *dharma* listed in the last section, the *Manu-smṛti* adds self-satisfaction (*ātmanas tuṣṭiḥ, priyam ātmanaḥ*; II, 6, 12)[12] and reiterates the *Dharmasūtras* with respect to clarifying the *dharma* through the decisions of virtuous and learned brāhmaṇas and their gathered councils (XII, 108-13). Also in the case of a conflict arising between two passages of scripture (*śruti*), both are to be considered as the *dharma* (II, 14), but whenever the *dharma* causes people pain, that part should be disregarded.[13] Such flexible provisions concerning the *dharma* left room for kings to use their own discretion or to make rational decisions in matters of law and administration when deemed necessary.[14]

Kings were entrusted with the right to punish crimes and use force in order to protect the people and maintain law and order. Such powers accompanying kingship were called *daṇḍa*, which means literally cane or staff, and came to refer to a whipping cane, the right to punish, the right to rule, military force and the militia itself. The word *daṇḍa-nīti*, meaning implementing *daṇḍa*, also means political science. In the *Dharmasūtras*, it is stated that *daṇḍa* was derived from *damana*, meaning "to control," in the sense that kings are to control those who are unable to control themselves.[15] At the stage of the *Manu-smṛti*, *daṇḍa* was placed in the context of a divine right bestowed on kings by God, and the discourse that follows runs for eighteen verses (VII, 14-31). Summing them up,

> In order to protect all living beings, Īśvara created *daṇḍa* as his son and entrusted him to the kings. Therefore, *daṇḍa* is the *dharma* itself and the king himself. It stems from the power and authority (*tejas*) of Brahman and governs and protects all living beings. *Daṇḍa* is personified as a black-skinned, red-eyed executioner, who never rests or sleeps, ever vigilant for wrongdoing, and punishing those who do evil. If living beings were left in their natural state, soon a chaotic situation of feeding off the weak would arise. However, due to the presence of *daṇḍa*, living beings who feared it never shirked their duties, and consequently order and peace spread over the whole world, including the world of the gods. Kings who have been entrusted with *daṇḍa* must use it properly in dealing with those who break the *dharma*. If *daṇḍa* is in fact implemented properly, it is assured that living beings will attain happiness and prosperity. However, if it is used incorrectly, *daṇḍa* will bring destruction down upon the king and his family, and even the whole world. Therefore, kings must be aware of and understand the truths about *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* explained in scripture. They also must be wise men with capable advisors.

[12] The *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* (I, 7) adds hope arising from correct intention (*samyaksaṅkalpajaḥ kāma*).

[13] In both the *Manu-smṛti* (IV, 175-76) and the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* (I, 156), it is written, "Men should strive to practice the *dharma*, but behavior that will not promise heaven after death, that people dislike, that results in unhappiness, and that saddens people should be avoided, even though it may be in accord with the *dharma*." It is also explained that the cycles of the universe (*yuga*), Kṛta-Treta-Dvāpara-Kali are characterized by different *dharmas* (I, 85-86).

[14] U. N. Ghoshal puts emphasis on the point that flexible, rational interpretations of the *dharma* made it applicable to the times, and proceeds to trace such an interpretation through history. *A History of Indian Political Ideas*, Madras, 1966, pp. 45-48, 103-04, 160, 296-97, 529-30.

[15] *Gaut.* XI, 28. √dam → damana. Also, *Gaut.* XI, 31.

The largest scale in which *daṇḍa* is enforced is in battle. During the Early Vedic Age, the most important duty of tribal chieftains (*rājan*) was to lead their tribes in war and cattle plundering. During the Later- and Post-Vedic Ages, after kingship was firmly established, kings were still required to command their armies in battle as the representatives of the kṣatriyas. The art and rules of warfare which the king is to follow on the battlefield consist of "respecting honor, fighting bravely, hoping to die on the battlefield and knowing the disgrace stemming from retreat." Kings who are nearing death are encouraged to leave their thrones to their sons and go to the battlefield to die (IX, 323). In victory, it is recommended that the tradition and customs of the conquered people be respected, brāhmaṇas be protected and a kinsman of the defeated ruler be placed on the throne (VII, 201-03). Chapter VII of the *Manu-smṛti* contains a detailed discussion of such facets as war and diplomacy, which cannot be covered thoroughly here, except to quote two more clauses which mention briefly the function of kingship in these respects.

> The king should be ready to acquire by means of *daṇḍa* things not yet obtained, guard things he has obtained with vigilance, multiply them through propagation, and distribute what was multiplied to those who deserve it. ...The king who is always militarily prepared will be feared throughout the world. This is why he should attempt to conquer all living beings through military might (VII, 101, 103).

C. The Later Dharmaśāstras

The mythology concerning the process by which living beings were plunged into the chaos that brought *daṇḍa* into being is described in the *Mahābhārata* as the process of greed infiltrating humans living in utopia, causing both depravity and chaos. It was only by efforts of the first ideal king, Pṛthu, or Manu, that the chaos was

ended.[16] The *Nārada-smṛti* summarizes the mythology as follows.

> During the time that people concerned themselves solely with obeying the *dharma* and speaking the truth, there was no need for litigation, hatred, or self-interest. However, later men lost sight of the *dharma*, necessitating the rise of litigation; and the king was created as the holder of *daṇḍa* to preside over such disputes (Intro. I, 1-2).

Since the later works of Hindu law merely repeat what their predecessors had to say about the functions of kingship, only the sections dealing with the paramount duty of protecting the people and those pertaining to the misuse of power will be quoted here.

> For kings, there is no greater *dharma* than bestowing the spoils of war on brāhmaṇas and keeping their subjects free of fear (*abhaya*).[17]
> The role of any king is to protect the people, show respect to elders and wise men, pass legal judgements and make sure that [all varṇas] fulfill their respective duties.[18]
> Due to the fact that kings are rich in bravery, intellect and wealth, and that they have especially the power to rule, their hearts and minds can always become astray for [even the slightest] reason. Therefore, it is up to brāhmaṇas to enlighten them to return to the king's duties (*rājadharma*). Kings should never be allowed to sway from the holy scripture, the greatest source of purification.[19]

2. The Character of Kingship

A. The Deification of Kings

In the Later Vedic Age, brāhmaṇas performed great royal sacrifices, such as *Rājasūya*, *Vājapeya* and *Aśvamedha*, to invest kings with sanctity or divinity. But as mentioned previously, there is very little discourse in the *Dharmasūtras* compiled in the Post-Vedic Age about the divine nature of kingship; rather, kings along with brāhmaṇas are recognized merely as the possessors of special authority and

[16] The *Mahābhārata* (critical ed.), XII (*Śāntiparvan*), 59, 13-141; 67, 17-32. Concerning mythology regarding the creation of kingship by Brahman or the sages (*ṛṣi*), see *Śāntiparvan*, 29, 129-35; 90, 8-9; 91, 3-17; 122, 22-24; 160, 10-87.
[17] *Yāj.* I, 322.
[18] *Nār.* XVIII, 33.
[19] *Kāty.* 4-5.

ritual supremacy. Only in the *Vāsiṣṭha-Dhs.* do we see the expression that kings sit on the throne of Indra (XIX, 48), a statement foreshadowing what was to come in the later works of Hindu law.

In the *Manu-smṛti*, the divine nature of kingship became a frequent topic of discussion, which continued into later works. In addition to the comparison of the duties of the king to the functions of the eight gods introduced previously, the *Manu-smṛti* says the following about the power and authority of the king.

> The king is obliged to protect all living beings, and for that purpose Prabhu created the king by extracting the eternal elements of the eight gods. This is why the king stands above all living beings in the light of his authority (*tejas*). And because he burns eyes and hearts, no one on earth can gaze on him. Moreover, the power (*prabhāva*) that comes with being a king is equivalent to the power of each of the eight gods. This is why the king is a magnificent divinity (*mahatī devatā*) in human form, and why even a child king should never be made light of. Fire only burns those who are careless; but the fire of a king's anger is capable of consuming whole families together with all their possessions. In order to fulfill the *dharma*, kings take on various forms depending on their purposes, capabilities, locations and times. The goddess of good fortune, Padmā, resides in the king's favor (*prasāda*), while victory resides in his bravery (*parākrama*) and death in his anger (*krodha*). Since the king is formed of the glowing authority of all the gods, anyone stupid enough to show him hatred will be destroyed. For this reason, any law which the king decrees must not be transgressed (VII, 1-13).

Here we find the rationale behind why the kingship is absolute and divine and why the people must unconditionally submit to it. Such a line of reasoning continues into the later works of Hindu law, like the *Nārada-smṛti*, which states,

> [The *dharma*], personified by a king, roams on earth visibly with a thousand eyes. There is no place in which people who disobey the king's orders can live. It is a predetermined rule that whatever the king does possesses authority, because he is obliged to protect his subjects, has the supreme right, and bestows his beneficence on living beings. ...Since the words of the king can determine a guilty person to be innocent and naturally an innocent person to be guilty, there is no one who can deny his divinity. Those who recognize the divinity of the king who has limitless authority, and receive alms from him will never be defiled by such behavior (XVIII, 20-21, 52-53).

The same work determines the killing of a king to be more serious than that of even brāhmaṇas.

> Anyone who criticizes a king in the proper performance of his royal duties is, for its atonement, to be punished by having his tongue cut out or all of his property seized. Anyone who maliciously attacks even a king guilty of crimes is to be burned at the stake, because he is more serious than the one who committed one hundred times the murder of a brāhmaṇa (XV-XVI, 30-31).[20]

The supreme power of kings is evidenced by the phrase, "by the act of providence or the king." That is to say, any disaster attributable to either was considered to be impossible to resist.[21]

There are some problems posed by the divine nature of kingship in ancient India, however. The first is that there is no idea in the works of Hindu law that royal blood is either sacred or divine in itself. While it is true that the first born prince would usually accede to the throne, his divinity would materialize during his sanctification at the enthronement ceremony,[22] which coincides with brāhmaṇa divinity being attained actually through initiation (*upanayana*) followed by the study of the Veda, since anyone, even a brāhmaṇa, prior to initiation would be looked upon as almost equivalent to a śūdra ritually.[23] Hindu law is also ambiguous as to whether the sanctification at the enthronement ceremonies was complete. The question is whether it was the existence of the king itself, or the function of kingship which was considered sacred.

While the descriptions of the *Manu-smṛti* and *Nārada-smṛti* cited above stress the absolute and sacred nature of kings, the same *smṛtis* emphasize the fall of kings who act contrary to the *dharma*. That is to say, the sanctity of any king was determined by whether or not he fulfilled his royal duties. From the *Manu-smṛti* on, both explanations appear together; however, those compilers who believed in the supremacy of the *dharma* of course finally inclined to adopt the latter.[24]

[20] On crimes against kings, see *Gaut.* XX, I; *Manu,* IX, 275; *Yāj.* II, 302-04; *Viṣ.* L, 6, 11-14. etc.

[21] *Yāj.* II, 59, 66, 197, 256. *Kāty.* 161-62, 523, 531, 594-95, 598. cf. *Yāj.* II, 113. However, the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* by no means plays up the divine aspect of kingship, due to the fact that it may have been influenced by the *Arthaśāstra*, as pointed out by Tokunaga Muneo. "Structure of the *Rājadharma* Section in the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* (i, 309-368)", *Kyōtodaigaku Bungakubu Kenkyū-kiyō*, 32 (1993), pp. 4, 31-32, 40-41.

[22] The works of Hindu law do not go into detail about the enthronement ceremony. It is covered in more detail in such works as the *Yajur Veda*, *Brāhmaṇas* and *Śrautasūtras*. See J. C. Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration*. P. V. Kane, *History* of *Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. II-2, pp. 1214-23; Vol. III, pp. 73-83. On the symbolization of the development of kingship during the Later Vedic Age as expressed in the enthronement ceremony procedures, see H. Kulke, "The Rājasūya, a Paradigm of Early State Formation?" in *Ritual, State and History in South Asia, Essays in Honour of J. C. Heesterman*, 1992, pp. 188-98.

[23] *Gaut.* II, 1-5. *Vās.* II, 6. *Baudh.* I, 2, 3, 6. *Manu,* II, 172; XI, 36.

[24] On this point see R. Lingat, *The Classical Law of India,* p. 208.

The next problem concerns the fact that despite the divine nature of kingship, kings were still bound by *karma* and *saṃsāra* (reincarnation), like all other living beings. One of the interesting examples comes from the *Kātyāyana-smṛti* (8-9). According to this work, a king is described as Indra, the king of gods, descending to earth and taking a human form; and those kings who fulfill their duties attain the position of Indra (*śakratva*), while those who do not are destined for Avīci hell (the worst hell). The precepts pertaining to the *dharma* of kings (*rājadharma*) appearing in the works of Hindu law seem to put a fair amount of restrictions on their behavior, stemming from a fear of hell and the hope to be born into heaven.

My last point is that while the works of Hindu law describe kingship as magnificent and divine, they also put emphasis on the divine nature of brāhmaṇas, going as far ranking brāhmaṇa divinity over royal divinity.[25] Even the *Nārada-smṛti*, which puts a lot of stress on the absolute nature of kingship, continues by directing that the following be also respected highly in addition to the king.

> There are eight types of auspicious things (*maṅgala*) in this world: brāhmaṇas, cows, fire, gold, clarified butter, the sun, water, and the king as the eighth. Everyone must always personally respect, venerate and worship all of them, and wishing long life, turn the right side towards them (XVIII, 54-55).

In other words, there were a number of things looked upon as divine in ancient India besides the king. While recognizing that the kings of ancient India were both respected and feared and that attempts were made to deify them, A. L. Basham has also noticed that brāhmaṇas, ascetics, householders during sacrificial ceremonies, even rocks and staffs at times, were looked upon as divine, while at times the gods themselves were capable of fallibility; thus concluding that from what appears in the contemporary sources, the price of deification was relatively cheap.[26] The deification of kingship by the works of Hindu law can be said to be characterized by ambiguity wavering between the extremes of absolutely unassailable to nominal deification. As we will see in the next chapter, the earliest Buddhist sources generally did not recognize the divine nature of kingship.

B. The Purity of Kings

The *Dharmasūtras* say the following about the purity (*śuddhi, śauca*) of kings.

> Kings [will be always pure] in order not to be impeded in fulfilling their duties, as will brāhmaṇas in order not to be interrupted in their daily study of the

[25] See Chapter III, 1-A of this volume.

[26] A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That was India*, London, 1954, pp. 86-87.

Veda.[27]
Even if kings were to go as far as to commit murder, they would be instantly purified. Also in cases not involving death [kings will remain pure]. The reason is time. ...Kings, those who are practising vows and those who are performing sacrificial ceremonies over a long period (*sattra*), will not experience the taint of impurity. This is because [kings] sit on the throne of Indra and [the others] are always equal to Brahman.[28]

The *Manu-smṛti* (V, 93-98) goes into more detail on the subject, which can be summarized as follows.[29]

> Kings who sit on the throne of Indra and fulfill their duty to protect the people are not defiled by sin (*aghadoṣa*), in the same way as those who have taken vows and those performing sacrifice; defilement will be followed immediately by purification. Those who are killed by kings and those whom kings wish to be pure will be instantly purified like those killed in battle, struck by lightening or sacrificing themselves for the sake of a cow or a brāhmaṇa. Since kings are the embodiment of the eight gods who protect the world, they cannot be defiled. This is because human purity and defilement come and go according to the will of these gods.

In another section we find, "Because kings punish the wicked and favor the good, they are ever pure, like brāhmaṇas performing sacrifices (VIII, 311)." For a king, politics was a ritual corresponding to sacrifices performed by brāhmaṇas.[30]

On the other hand, there are passages that highlight the defiling nature of kings and thus puzzle the reader. For example, the *Manu-smṛti* forbids brāhmaṇas to eat any food given them from a king (IV, 218)[31] and calls any service done to a king demeaning behavior (III, 64-65). Especially conspicuous is the following passage (IV, 84-91).

[27] *Gaut.* XIV, 45-46.
[28] *Vās.* XIX, 47-48. In place of "the reason is time," the *Manu-smṛti* inserts, "since kings are protectors of their subjects" (V, 93-94).
[29] See also *Yāj.* III, 27-29.
[30] The *Manu-smṛti* describes a typical day in the life of a king by likening it to one cycle of the universe beginning with Kali-*yuga* (the reverse of the usual cycle). The king sleeps during Kali-*yuga* (the dark and iron age), he wakes during Dvāpara-*yuga* (the bronze age), and begins his activities during Tretā-*yuga* (the silver age) and continues to work through Kṛta-*yuga* (the golden age)(IX, 301-02). The assignment of his political activities to Kṛta-*yuga* is probably a reference to his pure state during the time. Concerning the king's daily routine within the palace, see *Manu,* VII, 216-26. *Yāj.* I, 326-32.
[31] The reason is that a brāhmaṇa's authority (*tejas*) would be harmed. See also, *Yāj.* I, 164.

> Alms must not be received from kings not of kṣatriya orgins, butchers, oil pressers, liquor venders or brothel owners. One oil press is equivalent to ten slaughter houses [in the degree of defilement]. One liquor house is equivalent to ten oil presses, one brothel is equivalent to ten liquor houses, one king is equivalent to ten brothels. And so, a king is said to be equivalent to a butcher who keeps ten thousand slaughter houses. Receiving alms from him is frighteningly sinful. Anyone who receives alms from a king who is greedy and acts contrary to the sacred laws is destined for the following twenty-one hells. ...Wise brāhmaṇas, who are aware of this, study the Veda, and hope for happiness after death, would never take alms from such a king.[32]

We can understand that the citation refers only to kings not of kṣatriya origins, and those who are greedy and in variance with Hindu law. However, we can also assume that it is based on the strict ideas of fundamentalist brāhmaṇas who encouraged members of their varṇa to distance themselves from politics and kingship. The *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* contains a similar provision (I, 141), which reflects the latter fundamentalist view of kingship being tied to violence, corruption and expropriation.

Within the nine ranks for categorizing all things in creation contained in the last chapter of the *Manu-smṛti* (XII, 39-51), discussed in Chapter III, we find kings ranked fifth along with their *purohita* brāhmaṇas and kṣatriya comrades. Brāhamaṇas are third, vaiśyas sixth, and śūdras eighth. Here again the low ritual ranking of kings stems from the low esteem given by fundamentalists to secular affairs.

Since the later works of Hindu law read much like the *Manu-smṛti*, let us suffice with related passages from the *Nārada-smṛti.*

> As the fire is not defiled even though it will always burn all living things, so a king is not defiled by punishing those who deserve it (XVIII, 18).
> Even though the severest of kings, if he knows the *dharma,* acts accordingly, and punishes the wicked for the sake of protecting people, the wealth that he may accumulate is said to be pure. ...In the same way that pure and polluted water become the same after flowing into the sea, the wealth obtained by a king [is purified as soon as it enters his hand]. In the same way that gold is purified in a burning fire, all the wealth obtained by a king is purified under him (XVIII, 43-46).

Some recent research argues that kingship in South Asia was tied to the idea of auspiciousness. From the discussion here, it would be safe to say that the works of Hindu law view kings not only as pure, but also as auspicious as long as they

[32] See also *Yāj.* I, 140-41. *Nār.* XVIII, 44.

govern righteously. According to the *Kātyāyana-smṛti*,

> Auspiciousness (*śrī*) dwells in a king who controls his senses, is self-subdued, punishes the depraved, thinks deeply before acting and is extremely steadfast (3).

However, we must again recognize that the compilers of the works of Hindu law were also obliged to tie auspiciousness (*maṅgala*) and happiness (*śarman*) essentially to brāhmaṇas, as indicated by their naming in both terms (*Manu-smṛti*, II, 31-32), as opposed to the naming terms of kṣatriyas being derived from courage and protection. The prosperity brought on by kings necessitated the cooperation of brāhmaṇas in many cases.

The death of a king would cause a certain amount of defilement for all of his subjects. According to the *Dharmasūtras*, upon the death of a king, the study of the Veda would be interrupted for half or all of a day.[33] In the *Manu-smṛti*, upon the death of a king, his subjects would experience a period of defilement as long as either the sun or stars shine (V, 82),[34] a time shorter than the periods of defilement accompanying the death of a family member (ten days to a month depending on one's varṇa) or the death of a teacher, maternal relative, friend, etc. (one to three days).[35]

C. The Pedigree and Disposition of Kings

While usually originating from the kṣatriya varṇa, which at creation was entrusted with political and military affairs, the king, according to the *Manu-smṛti*, was created by God to protect all living beings independently of his varṇa (VII, 3-5). However, despite such differences of origin, since kings and their kṣatriya cohorts played similar roles in society, the former were in effect the leaders of the kṣatriyas (VII, 1-2), and kings of non-kṣatriya origins became objects of derision (IV, 61, 84-85).

On the other hand, it can be argued that as the king was created to protect the people, anyone who can fulfill royal duties has the right to become king.[36] In fact,

[33] *Gaut*. XVI, 32. *Baudh*. I, 11, 21, 4.

[34] The annotator Kullūka interprets this time of shining (*sajyotis*) as "If death occurs in the daytime, during the sun shines, if death occurs at night, during the stars shine."

[35] *Manu*, V, 57-83. Another passage directs that learned brāhamaṇas should not recite the Veda for three days on the occasion of the birth or death of a royal family member (*Manu*, IV, 110). Also, *Yāj*. III, 24-25; *Viṣ*. XXII, 44-46.

[36] "*nṛpo bhūpatiḥ na kṣatriyamātram*" (*Mitākṣarā* on *Yāj*. I, 117). Also, Medhātiti on *Manu*, V, 93-94. Kullūka on *Manu*, V, 94. The *Mahābhārata* also admonishes śūdra kings to protect the varṇa social order in times of distress (*āpad*). *Śāntiparvan*, 79, 34-43. R. Lingat, *op. cit*., pp. 209-10. P. V. Kane, *op. cit*., III, pp. 37-40.

the history of India has been marked by many non-kṣatriya kings, the authority of whom brāhmaṇas responded to with great flexibility.

As to what constituted the ideal king, the *Gautama Dhs*. says,

> The king rules over everyone, except brāhmaṇas. His deeds and words must be correct. He should be well versed in the three Vedas and in logic, pure, of controlled senses, be blessed with virtuous friends and policies, be fair in dealing with his subjects, and work hard for their happiness (XI, 1-6).

The *Manu-smṛti* elaborates these arguments about the disposition of kings by ordering them to avoid the ten evils (*vyasana*) arising from desire (*kāma*) and the eight evils arising from anger (*krodha*), and describes the levels to which each can be harmful (VII, 45-52). The former include hunting, gambling, napping, slander, women (lust), inebriation, singing, dancing, playing music, and wandering, while the latter include talking behind people's backs, violence, intent to do harm, jealousy, discontent, seizure of property, insults, and battery.

The *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* lists the virtuous qualities expected of kings.

> Having a magnanimous disposition and great purpose, knowing what is right, respecting elders, training, excellent character, noble birth, being truthful, pure, decisive, well-versed in works of law, not ignoble nor violent, virtuous and not evil, intelligent and brave, knowing secret, being able to overcome personal weaknesses and well-versed in philosophy, politics, enterprise and the three Vedas... (I, 308-10).[37]

The same work also states that the success of any king depends on both providence and personal effort, and that without the latter, the former will not come into play (I, 348-50). It goes without saying that kings as the leading members of the kṣatriyas had to be skilled in the martial arts as well as possess certain distinguishing personalities, which will not be enumerated here except for the following passage from the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti*.

> The king must be kind and forgiving towards brāhmaṇas, honest with his friends, ferocious towards his enemies, and like a father to his retainers and subjects (I, 333).[38]

[37] See also *Kāty*. 1-3.

[38] See also *Manu*, VII, 32, 80.

3. Kingship and Justice

A. The Dharmasūtras

Provisions concerning judicial matters in ancient varṇa society were basically laid down at the stage of the *Dharmasūtras*. To begin with, the king was designated as having the ultimate responsibility in penal affairs and was obliged to punish criminals in accordance with the *dharma*, which was to be interpreted by brāhmaṇas, thus making the latter advisors in the judiciary process.[39] Since the king was limited in the extent to which one person could be involved in that process, judges were to be appointed to act in his place. They were to be "learned, from upstanding families, elders, sagacious and devoted to duty."[40] Most were surely brāhmaṇas.

The king and his judges were to maintain neutrality in judicial matters, conduct them with logical reasoning, and deliberate and issue decisions in a serious and fair manner.[41] The bases for those decisions were the Veda and its supplemental studies (*Aṅga*), lawbooks, and tradition (*Purāṇa*), in addition to the customary laws of localities, caste groups and families, and the practices of occupational groups.[42] During deliberations, the following were to be taken into consideration: "the social status of the accused, his economic and physical capabilities, the nature of the alleged crime, and whether or not he was a recidivist" (*Gaut.* XII, 51), "the place, time, duties, age, intelligence and circumstances, the legal sources and precedents" (*Vās.* XIX, 9-10), and "his involvement in the crime with respect to instigation, compliance and perpetration" (*Āp.* II, 11, 29, 1-2).[43] Since the Veda was to be the standard for deliberation, trials were obviously based on the social discrimination.

As those convicted of crimes were ritually defiled, in order to be completely liberated they not only had to be punished in the secular world, but also be ritually purified through performing penance. It is probably true that punishment by the king often included both forms: "Those who commit crimes and are punished by the king will be cleansed and upon death be able to enter heaven like those who have done good."[44] Though penance belongs to a religious area under the jurisdiction of brāhmaṇas, some provisions allow for royal involvement in that area.[45]

[39] *Gaut.* XI, 19, 25-26; XII, 52; XXVIII, 48-51. Also, *Manu*, XII, 108-14. *Yāj.* II, 1-3.
[40] *Āp.* II, 11, 29, 5. Also, *Manu*, VII, 141; VIII, 9.
[41] *Āp.* II, 5, 11, 1-4; II, 11, 29, 5-6. *Gaut.* XI, 22-24. *Vās.* XVI, 1-5. Also, *Manu*, VIII, 44.
[42] *Gaut.* XI, 19-22. Also, note 6 of this Chapter. *Kāty.* 46, 943.
[43] Also, *Manu*, VII, 16; VIII, 45, 126. *Yāj.* I, 367.
[44] *Vās.* XIX, 45. Also, *Manu*, VIII, 318.
[45] The later annotators, who warned of the danger of royal involvement in religious affairs were of the opinion that only in the case of capital punishment was the king able to bring about ritual absolution, since those sentenced to death had no time to do penance. R. Lingat, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

One interesting provision related to this issue involves the punishment for anyone who committed the extremely serious crime of stealing gold from a brāhmaṇa. The perpetrator was to have his hair unraveled in disarray and appear before the king with a club to receive a beating. The king could choose to beat him, sometimes even to death, or to pardon him without issuing a blow. In either case, the criminal was purified of his wrongdoing. In the case of a pardon, the king himself was to bear the guilt.[46]

The *Dharmasūtras* are filled with passages praising kings who mete out justice properly, and criticizing those who do not.[47]

> One-fourth of the guilt [of a crime punished by an improper judgement] will be borne by the perpetrator, one-fourth by the witness, one-fourth by all the judges and one-fourth by the king. If he who deserves punishment is punished, the king is guiltless and the judges free from blame, only the perpetrator will bear the guilt.[48]

B. The Manu-smṛti

The passages in the *Manu-smṛti* develop the provisions in the *Dharmasūtras* to a great extent. Beginning with the types of crime, we find the claim that any king who prevents the five crimes of theft, adultery, verbal abuse, assault, and violence in his realm will attain prestige, the world of Indra (Śakraloka) and imperial authority (*sāmrājya*) (VIII, 386-87). As to the types of punishment meted out by kings we find four; in the order of severity, corporal punishment, fines, scolding, and admonition, which may be meted out concurrently (VIII, 129-30). Also,

> Any king who in accordance with sacred law protects living beings and executes those worthy of corporal punishment [earns merit equivalent to] performing sacrifices daily with almsgiving of hundreds of thousands (VIII, 306).[49]

Regarding those kings who judge and punish in accordance with scripture and those

[46] This provision appears in all four *Dharmasūtras* in one form or another: *Āp.* I, 9, 25, 4-5. *Gaut.* XII, 43-45. *Vās.* XX, 41. *Baudh.* II, 1, 1, 16-17. Also, *Manu*, VIII, 314-16; XI, 100-01. R. Lingat understands this as a vestige of the era of magical kings before the secularization of kingship (*ibid.*, pp. 235-36).
[47] For example, see *Āp.* II, 5, 11, 3-4; II, 11, 28, 13. *Gaut.* XI, 25-26; XII, 48. *Vās.* XIV, 8; XIX, 40-43, 46.
[48] *Baudh.* I, 10, 19, 8. Also, *Manu*, VIII, 18-19. cf. *Gaut.* XIII, 11.
[49] Also, *Yāj.* I, 358. *Manu*, VIII, 303.

who do not, the *Manu-smṛti* promises prestige, merit, prosperity of the kingdom; and the loyalty of their retainers to the former; ill repute, dishonor, sinfulness, defeat, the fall of the royal family and kingdom to the latter.[50] Pardoning criminals is equated to convicting the innocent (IX, 249), and whenever representatives of the king pass improper judgements, they are to be fined and the case retried by the king himself (IX, 234).[51] Furthermore, neither the king nor bureaucrats are allowed to litigate (VIII, 43), and the king cannot be summoned as a trial witness (VIII, 65).

As part of his duty to maintain law and order, the king was responsible for keeping together the family, the basic unit of society. For example, anyone found guilty of illegally abandoning his mother, father, wife or son was to be fined the large amount of 600 *paṇas* (VIII, 389). There is also a provision that prevents the king from exercising *daṇḍa* arbitrarily, putting him in the hand of a higher authority, Varuṇa, the god of justice (IX, 243-45). One provision prevents kings from annulling any judgement made according to the law (IX, 233), and another one allows brāhmaṇas to punish any perpetrator with magic without reporting it to the king (XI, 31-33).[52] In a case where it is difficult to arrive at a decision, it will be left up to divine judgement, but the *Manu-smṛti* does not go into detail about what that involves (VIII, 114-16).[53]

C. The Later Dharmaśāstras

The *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* says that the *Dharmaśāstras* are superior to the *Arthaśāstra* concerning the matter of legal decisions (II, 21),[54] and as to who should make those decisions, it lists royally appointed judges, organizations (*pūga*), occupational cooperatives (*śreṇi*) and families, arguing that the decisions of the earlier ones are more effective (II, 30).[55] Of course, the severity of sentencing varies according to varṇa

[50] *Manu*, VIII, 18-19, 127-28,174-75, 302-03, 316, 344-47, 386-87, 420, etc.

[51] The *Manu* sets the fine at 1000 *paṇas*, while the *Yājñavalkya* stipulates that after the king retries the case, a fine of twice the amount of the settlement is to be imposed on the judges and unlawful winner of the former lawsuit (II, 4, 305).

[52] See p. 52 of this volume. Concerning trials of ascetics, sorcerers, etc., the *Bṛhaspati-smṛti* says that in order to avoid their anger, kings should not try them personally, but rather appoint a judge well-versed in the three Vedas (I, 27).

[53] Neither do the *Dharmasūtras* (e.g., *Āp.* II, 5, 11, 3; II, 11, 29, 6). However the later *Dharmaśāstras* devote substantial sections to divine punishment. See *Yāj.* II, 95-113. *Viṣ.* IX-XIV. *Kāty.* 411-61.

[54] See also *Nār.* Intro. I, 39. One *Dharmasūtra* is of the same opinion; *dharma* is superior to *artha. Āp.* I, 9, 24, 23.

[55] The *Nārada* and other works substitute *gaṇa* for *pūga*, and divide the word "judge appointed by the king (*nṛpenādhikṛta*)" into the king himself (*nṛpa*) and his judge (*adhikṛta*), calling the king the paramount judge (*Nār.* Intro. I, 7; *Kāty.* 82). See also note 42 to this chapter. The *Bṛhaspti* divides judges into standard (*sabhya*) and supreme (*adhyakṣa*) and places the king above both. Those who are dissatisfied with a ruling made by the lower ranking group are advised to appeal to a higher group, all the way to king himself if necessary (I, 28-31). The *Kātyāyana* classifies groups (*varga*) as follows: citizens' groups (*naigama*), military units (*vrāta*), merchant groups (*pūga*), unorthodox religious organizations (*pāṣaṇḍa*), brāhmaṇa groups (*gaṇa*), craftmen's groups (*śilpin*), Jaina and Buddhist organizations (*saṅgha*), untouchable groups (*gulma*) and cooperatives (*śreṇi*) (678-82).

and birth (II, 206, 214), and as we have seen above, in issuing decisions emphasis should be put on local, caste and family customs. The *Bṛhaspati-smṛti* warns kings that ignoring or breaking such customs could invite rebellion and the loss of the militia and the treasury (II, 28).

The *Nārada-smṛti* contains the following provision important for discovering the relationship between the king and the judiciary.

> The *dharma*, litigation (*vyavahāra*), custom (*caritra*) and royal edict (*rājaśāsana*) are the four feet of a lawsuit. Each following one is superior to the previous one. There, the *dharma* is based on the truth, litigation [based on the words of] witnesses, custom [based on] documents [describing its content] and edict [based on] royal orders (Intro. I, 10-11).

We find about the same content in the *Bṛhaspati-smṛti* (II, 18-27), the *Arthaśāstra* (III, 1, 39-40)[56], and the *Kātyāyana-smṛti* (35-43), but what is puzzling is the low regard given for the *dharma*, since elsewhere it is bestowed with authority transcending that of kings. However, as discussed in Section 1, the *dharma* has both broad and narrow meaning. And in the above provision it is not used to mean Vedic *dharma*, but is rather used in the sense of general morality and truth. The *Kātyāyana-smṛti* (35-51) explains the "four feet" as follows.

> Decisions based on the *dharma* are made in such cases as the accused fearing the sin of opposing it confesses to his wrongdoing, and after that negotiations are settled regarding compensation to the victim, etc. Decisions in the case of litigation are made based on judicial procedures indicated by scripture. Thirdly, there are decisions based on local customs, which transcend litigation: customs of people on the periphery of varṇa society, like mulattos and mountain dwellers, and unique customs of specific regions. Customs in the general sense must never contradict the Veda or the works of Hindu law. However, matters not provided for in scripture may be decided based on local customs. Decisions based on royal edicts mean the decisions in which the king is not at odds with either scripture or customs, and also those made when the king feels that cus-

[56] The *Arthaśāstra* explains that the custom is based on the commonly held view (*saṃgraha*) of men (III, 1, 40).

tom opposes scripture. The rule stipulating that "the latter precede the former" — that is, royal edicts take precedence over the *dharma*, litigation and custom — can be applicable to these particular situations, without which that same rule would end up destroying the *dharma*. Kings must never issue edicts that are at odds with the Veda or scripture, which would result in their own defeat, death and damnation and the destruction of their people.

By explaining royal edicts in this way, the compilers of the *Kātyāyana-smṛti* were attempting to prevent arbitrariness on the part of kings. The annotators of later times interpreted this ranking of judicial decisions as the order of how to procedure. That is to say, if the first three procedures do not produce a satisfactory legal decision, then the king is to be the last resort.[57] Kings were not the promulgators of the *dharma*, but they issued and implemented orders necessary to conduct political affairs in the real world. This is why royal edicts are given precedence in the above passage. This idea first appeared in the more realistic *Arthaśāstra*, and the later *Dharmaśāstras* would continue to include it while applying "limits."

As to the analogy between judicial proceedings and sacrificial ceremonies, the *Bṛhaspati-smṛti* elucidates with the following comparison.[58]

Sacrifice	Trial
Viṣṇu	the king
sponsor	victorious plaintiff
sacrificial victim	unsuccessful plaintiff
clarified butter	the complaint and defense
offerings	oath
Vedic verses	sacred books of law
officiating priest	judges
alms	fines
the congregation	accountants and recorders

The same work also compares a trial to a tree and the fruit it bears.

> The brāhmaṇa is the root of the tree of *dharma*, the king its trunk and branches, his ministers its leaves and blossoms, and righteous protection its fruit. Fame and wealth are the juice of its fruit, and support, worship, invincibility, public respect and eternal life in heaven are the enjoyment [of the fruit].

[57] Divine judgement is seen as a decision according to the *dharma*. *Bṛh.* II, 20-21. *Kāty.* 39. On the "four feet" of litigation, see also *Bṛh.* II, 18-27. R. W. Lariviere, *The Nārada-smṛti*, Part Two, Philadelphia, 1989, pp. 5-6. P. V. Kane, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 259-62.
[58] *Bṛh.* (Aiyangar ed.) I, 118-20.

> Having recognized these advantages in [the pursuit of] justice, the king must be fair to the parties in a suit, abandon his avarice and other [evil propensities] to render proper judgement (I, 34-36).

The later *Dharmaśāstras* also guarantee the people the right to litigate and the right to appeal,[59] and state that all lawbreakers, including members of the royal family, should be brought to justice and punished,[60] arguing that since the punishment of one criminal guarantees the security of many people, even capital punishment brings merit to the king.[61] There are many passages regarding what awaits kings who judge properly and those who do otherwise. Here are two examples.

> When in accordance with the law, [punishment] makes the whole world with the gods, *asuras* and men happy. But when otherwise, makes rejoice angry. Lawless punishment destroys heaven, prestige and the world, while legitimate punishment brings heaven, prestige and victory for the king.[62]

Like the seven types of flame emanating from fire, a king who has restrained himself and renders judgements in accordance with the *dharma* realizes the seven types of merit: the *dharma*, *artha*, fame, public respect, popular support, high evaluation in the eyes of his subjects, and eternal life in heaven.[63]

4. Protection and Taxation

A. The Dharmasūtras

One of the important elements in the king's duty to protect his subjects was preventing brigandage and thievery and the harm they rendered. When a theft did occur, it was up to the king or his appointed representatives to recover the stolen property or compensate the victim. The *Dharmasūtras* have this to say.

> If recovered, stolen property should be returned [by the king] to its proper owner, or [if it cannot be recovered, the king] is to reimburse [the victim in full] from the treasury.[64]
> [The king] should station pure and truthful *āryas* (*dvijas*) in [his kingdom's] villages and towns to protect the people. The subordinates [of these *āryas*]

[59] *Yāj.* II, 5-6, 305-06. *Nār.* Intro. I, 65-66.
[60] *Yāj.* I, 357-58. See also *Manu*, VIII, 335.
[61] *Bṛh.* XXVII, 26.
[62] *Yāj.* I, 355-56.
[63] *Nār.* Intro. I, 32-33.
[64] *Gaut.* X, 46-47. See also *Manu*, VIII, 40. *Yāj.* II, 36.

should also be of the same virtue. They are to protect towns from thieves on a one *yojana* wide perimeter and villages on a one *krośa* wide perimeter. They (local officials) are to return any property stolen within that area [to its rightful owner].[65]

Thieves were punished severely, and any king who failed to do so would bear their guilt himself.[66]

Also included in the king's duty to protect his subjects was ensuring a livelihood for brāhmaṇas and ascetics in his kingdom and providing relief for the poor. We find related provisions throughout the *Dharmasūtras*.[67]

The king who protects his subjects has the right to tax them.[68] The main form of taxation was one-sixth of the grain harvest. The *Baudhāyana* uses the term "*ṣaḍbhāgabhṛta*," meaning "the one hired for one-sixth" referring to the king (I, 10, 18, 1). However, the literature differs slightly over the actual proportion. The *Gautama* mentions the following kinds of taxes.[69]

> Grain tax on cultivators: one-tenth, one-eighth, or one-sixth of their harvests. (The different rates may reflect differences in the fertility of land.)
> Tax on herders and money lenders: one-fiftieth of their herds or loans.
> Tax on merchants: one-twentieth of gross sales.
> Tax on hunters and gatherers of roots, fruits, flowers, herbs, honey, grass, firewood, etc.: one-sixth of what they obtained.[70]

In addition, artisans, laborers, boatmen, cart-drivers, etc. were levied one day's corvee per month,[71] but their meals on that day were paid for by the king.[72] On the other hand, as we have seen in Chapter III, brāhmaṇas were thought to render to the king one-sixth of the merit they earned in performing ceremonies and doing

[65] *Āp.* II, 10, 26, 4-8.
[66] *Āp.* I, 6, 19, 16; I, 9, 25, 5. *Vās.* XIX, 44.
[67] *Āp.* II, 10, 25, 11; II, 10, 26, 22-23. *Gaut.* X, 9-12, 48. *Vās.* XVI, 7-9; XIX, 35-37, etc. See also *Manu*, VII, 133-36; VIII, 27-29, 394-95, etc.
[68] *Gaut.* X, 24-28. *Vās.* I, 42. *Baudh.* I, 10, 18, 1.
[69] *Gaut.* X, 24-28. We find similar lists in the *Manu-smṛti*, but the tax rates are different: for example, the grain tax is one-eighth, one-sixth and one-twelfth, the gold and animal tax is one-fiftieth (VII, 127-32; VIII, 398; X, 120).
[70] U. C. Pandeya's revised edition cites the figure one-sixth; however, Haradatta's annotation and G. Bühler's translation contain one-sixtieth, but the *smṛtis* state one-sixth (*Manu*, VII, 131; *Viṣ*. III, 25).
[71] *Gaut.* X, 31-33. See also *Manu*, VII, 138; X, 120.
[72] *Gaut.* X, 34.

good deeds, etc., and so were exempt from any taxes in kind or money.[73] In this sense, under the provision that "the king is entitled to a portion of the merit accumulated by his subjects," it may be said that the general populace was paying dual tax. Also exempt from taxation were women, children, the elderly, students, ascetics, those who had renounced the world, servants, deaf, dumb and blind persons, orphans, and bureaucrats.[74]

B. The Manu-smṛti

Here we find discourse on those bureaucrats who advised the king and were charged with the actual tasks involved in protecting the people and maintaining law and order. For example,

> In order for kings to implement *daṇḍa* and rule over their subjects properly, they should be surrounded by able advisors (VII, 30-31).
> To begin with, seven or eight ministers of state should be chosen from the most intelligent and militarily skilled scions of upstanding families. It is also desirable that these posts be inherited. Kings should avoid taking personal charge of affairs based on their own arbitrariness and seek advice in both domestic and diplomatic matters, then adopt the optimum measures available. The most important issues should be discussed with the most able brāhmaṇa among the royal advisors, and policy should be made on the basis of his counsel (VII, 54-59).
> Kings are urged to choose bureaucrats who are loyal, wise, firm, brave and from upstanding families, station them where they best function and have them administer and levy taxes in order for the kingdom to prosper and the people to live in peace (VII, 60-68, 80-81; IX, 324).
> Kings must not neglect to supervise upper and lower bureaucrats. This is why kings should employ intelligence agents. Kings should understand how easy it is for their administrators to be corrupted and start seizing people's property. Such greedy and corrupt officials are to be dismissed and have their own property seized, and anyone who commits the most egregious crime of falsifying royal edicts is to be executed (VII, 120-24; IX, 231-32).

Another important aspect of protecting the people was preventing violent crime. Kings were urged to be ever vigilant concerning such crime and warned that any king who pardons such a perpetrator would fall from power (VIII, 344-47). The *Manu-smṛti* agrees with the *Dharmasūtras* on the point that preventing theft and punishing thieves is one of the most important royal duties. Kings are urged to elim-

[73] *Vās.* I, 42-44. See also pp. 48-49 of this volume.
[74] *Āp.* II, 10, 26, 11-17. *Vās.* XIX, 23-24.

inate those "out in the open" who steal the property of others through fraudulent selling, etc. and those "who conceal themselves" in the mountains and forests to rob. Those who aid and abet them or those who shirk their duty in subduing them are to be severely punished (VIII, 302; IX, 256-93). All property recovered from thieves and robbers is to be returned to its original owner, regardless of his varṇa. Any king who fails to return stolen property and keeps it for his own use is himself guilty of theft (VIII, 40).

The provisions pertaining to taxation repeat over and over the necessity of levying taxes according to the law.[75] For example,

> The king must not uproot himself [by failing to levy taxes] or [uproot] others with his excessive greed. This is because uprooting oneself leads to personal misery and [uprooting] others [leads to their misery] (VII, 139).
> No matter how bare his treasury may be, a king must never take anything that should not be taken; and no matter how full his treasury may be, a king must never leave anything that should be taken, regardless of its amount. Taking what should not be taken and leaving what should be taken merely attests to the weakness of any king, leading to his destruction in this world and the next (VIII, 170-71).
> The king should draw yearly taxes from his realm little by little, like leeches, calves and honey bees take their food little by little (VII, 129).
> Taxes should always be drawn from [a king's] realm [gradually], like the rays of the sun take eight months to dry up the standing water (IX, 305).

Since the king's right to tax stemmed from his duty to protect his subjects, any king who did not protect them would be taxing them illegally. This reasoning is repeated often in the *Manu-smṛti*. The second of the following examples pertains to the increase of taxes in a crisis under the principle of "in times of emergency or distress."

> Any king who levies land taxes (*bali*), miscellaneous taxes (*kara*) and customs toll (*śulka*), and takes daily presents and fines without protecting [his subjects] is soon damned to hell. It is said that a king who collects one-sixth of the annual harvest without protecting [his subjects] will be guilty of all the crimes of his whole people (VIII, 307-08).
> In times of distress, even though a kṣatriya [king] collects as much as one-fourth [of the harvest], he will be free of guilt as long as he does everything in his power to protect his subjects (X, 118).

[75] *Manu*, VII, 80, 127-39; VIII, 170-72, 304-09; IX, 254-55, 305; X, 118-20.

Of course the reverse also follows that people who received the king's protection were obligated to remit taxes, and tax evaders were to be punished for shirking their obligations. According to one provision, the fine for tax evasion was eight times the taxes owed (VIII, 400). Kings are often referred to as "lords of the Earth (*bhūmipati*)," which is merely a symbolic expression of their sovereignty with no economic meaning of being landlords over their realms collecting rent from their tenant subjects.

C. *The Later Dharmaśāstras*

These works continue in more or less the same vein as the *Manu-smṛti* on the subject of taxation. The *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* states the following about illegal taxation and the possibility of mass rebellion.

> No matter what crimes people who are not being protected [by their king] commit, the king will incur half of the guilt. This is because he is collecting taxes [from them] (I, 336).
> The king who enriches his treasuries unlawfully at the expense of his country is close to losing his good fortune and will be destroyed together with his relatives. The fire that breaks out from the agony of oppressed people will not be extinguished until it has consumed the king's good fortune, his family, and his own life (I, 339-40).

As will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, the Buddhist literature, which interprets kingship as originating from a social contract, argues that the taxes collected by kings constitute remuneration from their subjects for protecting them. We find a similar view in one later *Dharmaśāstra*, which uses the term "*prajāpālanavetana* (remuneration for protecting people)" in referring to taxes (*bali*),[76] but there is no idea of it stemming from a social contract. Rather, all the works of Hindu law consider the king's right to tax as having been bestowed by the god who created him to protect his subjects; the destruction, by popular rebellion or otherwise, of any king who shirks his duty is none other than divine retribution.[77] The *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* also takes pains to remind kings to protect their subjects

[76] *Nār*. XVIII, 48.

[77] Concerning the king's right to tax and the justification for rebellion, see also J. W. Spellman, *Political Theory of Ancient India*, Oxford, 1964, pp. 1-25, 176-95, 225-43. A. S. Altekar rather one-sidedly states that 1) both rebellion and flight were means of resisting evil kings, 2) in ancient India, local villages and towns would usually arm themselves for self-defense, making rebellions in the form of armed uprisings easy, and 3) such a local state of things functioned effectively in restricting arbitrary, selfish behavior on the part of kings. *State and Government in Ancient India*, 3rd ed., Delhi, 1958, pp. 101-04.

from any possible wrongdoing on the part of the *kāyasthas*, the accountants and scribes, who kept track of tax collection (I, 335).

Concerning the king's obligation to return stolen goods to their rightful owners, the *Kātyāyana-smṛti* puts it in concrete terms as follows.

> The king is to have thief-catchers return the goods stolen in houses. If the thief is not caught, the king will have guards or local constables [make restitution equal to the worth of the stolen items]. Property stolen in villages will be returned by village superintendents, [property stolen] in forests by the king, [and property stolen] in places other than forests by officers in charge of catching thieves (813-14).
> Anything that is stolen from anyone in any kingdom will be returned by its king. ...When the thief is apprehended, but the goods he stole not recovered from him, [the king himself] should return them, or if the king wishes, make the thief pay restitution (815-17).[78]

Another right indirectly related to taxation concerned the king's claim to property whose owner was not clear, property having no heir, buried treasure and the like. What to do about such property was already fairly settled at the stage of the *Dharmasūtras*. Here is what the *Gautama Dhs.* says.

> He who finds lost property with no owner is to report it to the king. The king will announce the find publicly and store the item for one year. Afterwards, the finder will receive one-fourth and the king will take the rest (X, 36-38).[79] Whenever buried treasure is discovered, it will become the property of the king. [However, if it is found by] a upright brāhmaṇa, [it will revert to him]. Some declare that if a finder other than a brāhmaṇa reports [his discovery to the king], he will receive one-sixth (X, 43-45). The property of a brāhmaṇa with no heirs will be divided among a group of learned brāhmaṇas; that of others [will revert to] the king (XXVIII, 41-42).[80]

The *Manu-smṛti* states that all of the buried treasure found by a learned brāhmaṇa

[78] Anyone who failed to report to the king that he had recovered stolen property was to be fined. Lost or stolen items that the government had received and was storing could be claimed within one year's time after showing proof of ownership and paying a storage charge. After one year such items reverted to the king. *Yāj.* II, 171-74. See also *Arth.* III, 16, 17-24.

[79] See also *Baudh.* I, 10, 18, 16.

[80] See also *Vās.* XVII, 84-87. *Baudh.* I, 5, 11, 14-16. Property that had been abandoned (*prahīnadravya*) also became the king's property (*Vās.* XVI, 19).

may be retained by him, for the reason that "he is the lord (*adhipati*) of everything" (VIII, 37). When found by the king, half of the treasure will revert to him, the other half to brāhmaṇas (VIII, 38-39).[81]

The king as protector was also involved in various ways in the economic activities of his subjects, including the standardization and supervision of weights and measures, commodity price determination, and monopolizing the sale of certain goods. This aspect of kingship does receive mention in the works of Hindu law, but the discourse is not very extensive. The *Arthaśāstra* is far more informative, but space limitations prohibit any further discussion of it.

Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter that the works of Hindu law place kings and kingship at the center of the secular world. In order to carry out their functions, kings were granted *daṇḍa* (the right to punish and wage war) from God, which was to be exercised in strict accordance with the *dharma* of the Veda, necessitating that they seek the counsel of brāhmaṇas well-versed in scripture. However, since the Veda provided only a limited range of solutions to practical problems, the "*dharma*" was extended to include the customary law of families, castes and regions, the behavior patterns of virtuous people, and decisions made out of good conscience. Consequently, its content became more and more vague, which gave a suitable amount of flexibility and discretion to kings in solving problems in the real world. On the other hand, we also saw the works of Hindu law themselves making efforts to recognize and compromise with kingship: for example, the recognition by the later *Dharmaśāstras* of royal edicts as the most important or the last resort in legal decisions.

Works of Hindu law from the *Manu-smṛti* on emphasize the divine nature of kings, as well as their purity and their auspiciousness. On the contrary, there are passages dealing with kings as the perpetrators of crimes, sources of impurity and possessing status inferior to that of brāhmaṇas. One understanding common to all of the brāhmaṇa compilers of these works is that the king's divinity, purity and auspiciousness depend on whether or not he acts in accordance with the *dharma*.

To be a king is a temporary form of a soul that comes and goes in the eternal ebb and flow of the world of *karma* and *saṃsāra*. Hindu law specifies that kings who act in accordance with the *dharma* will attain happiness in this world and the next, and those who do not are destined to destruction in this world and suffering

[81] See also *Yāj.* II, 34-35. The *Manu* also states that one-sixth, one-tenth or one-twelfth of any lost property that is found afterwards and one-sixth or one-twelfth of the buried treasure whose owner becomes clear will revert to the king (VIII, 33, 35).

in the next. Indeed, the concepts of *karma* and *saṃsāra* must have been strong deterrents to arbitrariness on the part of kings in ancient India. Now while the ideal king was thought to be a member of the kṣatriya varṇa, there was also room left for the interpretation that as long as he performed the duty of protecting his subjects, any member of any varṇa was suitable to be king.

Conducting judicial proceedings was an important part of the king's duty to protect his subjects and maintain law and order, and was a source of merit for him equal to his sponsorship of sacrificial ceremonies. Through fairly conducted trials both the king and the accused were purified; meaning that, at times, kings became involved in the area of atonement usually reserved for brāhmaṇas. On the other hand, kings who shirked their duties and let criminals go free or punished innocent people would bear the guilt arising from the crime themselves. When unable to return stolen goods to their rightful owners, kings would have to reimburse them.

Kings were required to treat their subjects with the love and understanding of a father and take special care of brāhmaṇas, ascetics and the weaker members of society. Kings were also the sponsors of state ceremonies, mobilizing brāhmaṇas to conduct sacrifices to help their realms prosper. On the other hand, for those of his subjects who deviated from the *dharma*, the king could be a frightening figure in the guise of Yama, the god of death, and Varuṇa, the god of justice. For the king, politics was a religious act equivalent in meaning to sacrifices for brāhmaṇas.

Politics conducted in accordance with the *dharma* to protect people rewarded the king with a portion of his subjects' earnings. That is to say, the king was entitled to a portion of the "income" his people earned through meritorious deeds and labor. Such an idea was the reasoning behind the king's right to tax his subjects, and the right was believed to have been granted by God. The remittance of taxes was therefore a divine obligation for the people. It also follows that any attempt to tax by a king who failed to protect constituted an illegal act, and such kings were held liable both before the taxpayers and God for such a crime, which would eventually bring down upon them divine retribution in the form of destruction in this world and damnation in the next. Popular uprisings against unrighteous kings were also affirmed and recognized in the same vein of divine punishment.

Chapter VI
KINGSHIP AS DESCRIBED IN BUDDHIST SOURCES

1. The Origins and Necessity of Kingship

At the time of the rise of Buddhism, there were two kinds of polities, *gaṇa-saṅgha* states and monarchies, the latter being characterized by a king, about whom one Buddhist source states, "The mark of a cart is its flag, the mark of fire is smoke, the mark of a country is its king, and the mark of a woman is her husband."[1] Of the important traditions handed down by Buddhists about kingship is the legend of Mahāsammata told in the *Aggañña-suttanta* of the *Dīgha-Nikāya*.[2]

> In the beginning, when humans were born, they originated from consciousness (*mano*), fed on rejoicing (*pīti*), gave off their own light, could fly, and were happy. The world consisted only of water and was enclosed in darkness. There was no moon, sun or stars, no distinction between day and night, months and years, seasons, or males and females.
>
> Over a long time, the sweet earth (*rasapaṭhavī*) of color and odor gradually rose in the water. Upon seeing one greedy person eating the sweet earth, another began eating it, and another, until the light emanating from humans disappeared, and the moon, sun and stars appeared, as did the distinctions between day and night, months and years and the seasons. After eating the sweet earth over a long period of time, the human body grew rough and hard, differences arose between handsome and ugly appearances, as those with the former became conceited.
>
> When the taste of the earth disappeared, sweet outgrowths in the soil (*bhūmi-pappaṭaka*) with color and odor arose, and as the result of eating them over a long period of time, the human body became rougher and harder, clearly handsome and ugly, as the former held the latter in contempt. Then the outgrowths disappeared, and sweet vines (*badālatā*) with color and fragrance appeared and then were consumed in the same manner.
>
> After the vines disappeared, full-grown rice appeared naturally without cultivation. The rice had neither bran nor husk, was fragrant, and after harvesting for the evening meal, it would grow back by morning. When harvested for the morning meal, it would grow back by evening; and no one could see the stubbles. As the result of eating the rice for a long time, the human body

[1] *SN*. I, p. 42.
[2] *DN*. III, pp. 84-93.

became even rougher and harder, the difference between handsome and ugly became clearer, and the distinction between male and female appeared. There were those among the men and women who were taken by lust and they engaged in sexual intercourse. Upon seeing this, people threw mud and cow dung at them, drove them away and would not let them back in their villages or towns for as long as one or two months. Those of such ill virtue built houses to hide their lewd behavior.

The negligent among them disliked the troublesome work of harvesting twice a day, once in the morning, once in the evening, and proceeded to reap a full day's harvest all at once. Seeing this, others began harvesting two-day supplies of rice, which escalated into four-day, then eight-day supplies. When people went to eat the rice they had harvested and stored, they found that it had become encased in husk and bran, and also found that the harvested rice stalks remained sheared. And so people began dividing the paddy and drawing boundaries.

Later, greedy people began stealing the rice out of the paddies and were beaten by others with bare hands, dirt clods and sticks. Then evil deeds (*pāpaka-dhamma*) of theft, censure, falsehood and punishment appeared; and people then gathered and decided to choose one man to punish and exile the evil, and to give him a certain allotment of their rice. They chose the most handsome, charming and authoritative man among them, who became the first human king ever, Mahāsammata, or "he who was elected by a consensus of the masses." He was also called *khattiya* and *rājan*.

We discover from the above tale that Buddhists in ancient India conceived of kingship and the state (monarchies) as appearing together with the establishment of private property. Both the *Mahāvastu*[3] and Vol. I of the *Mūla-sarvāstivāda-Vinaya* (*Saṅghabhedakavastu*)[4] contain similar tales about Mahāsammata and state that the king was entitled to "one-sixth of the harvest," which is in accordance with the works of Hindu law. L. Dumont has cited this legend as proving the existence of the idea of a social contract bereft of any religiosity, and argues that society was conceived of as a body made up of individuals, pointing out that the legend was adopted by those who believed in world renunciation and placed ultimate value on

[3] É. Senart ed., *Le Mahāvastu*, Tome I, Paris, 1882, pp. 338-48. J. J. Jones tr., Vol. I, pp. 285-93.

[4] *Taishō*, XXIV, pp. 99b-100c. The Chinese *Tripiṭaka* contains many references to the Mahāsammata legend, including the following four *sūtras*: *Shih-chi-ching*, *Taishō*, I, pp. 147c-48a. *Ch'i-shih-yin-pên-ching*, *Taishō*, I, pp. 416c-18a. *Fo-pên-hsing-chi-ching*, *Taishō*, III, p. 672a-b. *Fo-shuo-chung-hsü-mo-ho-ti-ching*, *Taishō*, III, pp. 932b-33c. The first also offers an explanation of the origins of the conjugal couple, birth from the mother's womb,

individual ethics (and therefore were the people who practiced complete individualism).[5]

Also in the *Jātakas*, protecting the people and maintaining law and order are cited as the most important duties of any king. It is said that in any country without a king, the people could not survive due to a lack of protection;[6] and that even birds and beasts select kings out of fear concerning the chaos that could arise from anarchy.[7] From the above ideas concerning kingship, any subject who did not remit taxes to the king could be punished for not performing their part of the bargain, while any king who failed to protect his people could, accordingly, be deprived of his throne. The legitimization of the latter also appears in the Brahmanic literature, as seen in the previous chapter. However, unlike the Brahmanic idea of a social order based on the *varṇa-āśrama-dharma*, what is sought after in Buddhist scripture is one based on its *dharma* of universal righteousness. Although the Buddhist sources do recognize the social existence of the four varṇas, what is ideally sought in a king is not a social order characterized by stratification and discrimination, but rather happiness and prosperity for all varṇas on the basis of equality. Also, domestic stability was a great concern for kings, and the *Jātakas* often have them traveling around in disguise to discover the true sentiment of their people.[8]

The etymology of the term *rājan* in the above Mahāsammata legend is "one who pleases others via the law" (*dhammena pare rañjeti*).[9] This explanation is not linguistically accurate,[10] but rather stems from the Buddhist emphasis on kings with

and the city. While lacking an explanation of how Mahāsammata was chosen, the third states that he responded to the wishes of the people and distributed paddy to them. The fourth mentions that Mahāsammata did protect his subjects and distributed arable to them on an equal basis. However, none of the four *sūtras* contain the figure "one-sixth of the harvest."

[5] The social contract idea contained in the *Mahābhārata* retains the religious elements of merit and sinfulness. L. Dumont, "The Conception of kingship in Ancient India," in *Religion, Politics and History in India*, Paris, 1970, pp. 74-76. In the later Vedic literature, orthodox brāhmṇas explain the origin of the king in the world of the gods: (1) to overcome the strong army of demons, the gods elected Indra as their king (*rājā*), (2) the god Prajāpati accepted the petitions of the gods and sent his son Indra to become their king. See A. L. Basham, *The Wonder That was India*, London, 1954, p. 81.

[6] *J*. I, p. 307; III, pp. 508-14; VI, p. 39.

[7] *J*. II, p. 352. See also *J*. I, p. 207; V, p. 462.

[8] *J*. IV, p. 370; V, pp. 101-08, 439-40.

[9] *DN*. III, p. 93.

[10] The root seems to be Indo-European "*reĝ*" meaning "to outstretch" and "to proceed in a straight line." The Latin "*rēx*" has the same etymology. J. A. Santucci, "Aspects of the Nature and Functions of Vedic Kingship," in *Kingship in Asia and Early America*, A. L. Basham ed., Mexico, 1981, pp. 83-90. Also see É. Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society*, E. Palmer tr., London, 1973, pp. 307-12. M. Hara, "A Note on the Epic Folk-

benevolent hearts and the intent to maintain peace and order among their people.

There are also various other definitions of "king" appearing here and there in the Buddhist literature. One is the concept of the king as the leading member of the kṣatriyas, such as "the one anointed (*abhisitta*) by the kṣatriyas."[11] Here we see that kings were ideally thought to originate from the kṣatriya varṇa, but in reality non-kṣatriya kings did appear. In the *Jātakas*, men of virtue of brāhmaṇa or *gahapati* (upstanding citizens) origins are urged by people to ascend the throne.[12] In other words, as long as a king was virtuous and did all he could to protect his people, his origins would not be questioned. A similar attitude also appears in the Brahmanic idea of kingship, but is regarded as "exceptional." Needless to say, according to the views of life and death among ancient Indians, ascending the throne in this world was the result of *karma* in one's past life.[13]

Other definitions of "king" include "kings are those who govern, and royal retainers are those who receive stipends from the king"[14] and "kings include kings over the earth, local kings, heads of principalities, aristocrats, magistrates, and high ranking bureaucrats, or those who mete out corporal punishment."[15] In the latter definition, we see kingship characterized by a hierarchy of power.

2. Exercising Kingship

The proper use of power by a king would result in peace and prosperity for his people, while its improper use could result in disaster and downfall. In the Buddhist sources, right and wrong is determined according to the *dharma*, the explanation of which takes the following two paths.[16]

1) If kings rule their countries properly and hold proper trials, their ministers carry out their duties properly, litigation will cease and trials will become unnecessary.
2) If kings rule their countries contrary to the law, their ministers commit injustices and the people will be threatened constantly with over-taxation by officials and plundering by brigands.

Etymology of *Rājan*," *The Journal of the Ganganatha Jha Research Institute*, Vol. XXV (1969), pp. 489-99. The traditional etymology of the Indian classics is √*rāj* (to shine; *Nirukta*, II, 3) and √*rañj* (to be delighted; *Mahābhārata*, XII, 59, 127).

[11] *MN*. II, p. 121. *AN*. I, pp. 107-08; III, p. 151.

[12] *J*. I, pp. 326-27; II, p. 124; III, p. 514.

[13] For example, the *Lakkhaṇa-suttana* of the *Dīgha-Nikāya* gives a detailed account of *cakkavattin* appearing in the world as the result of good *karma*. *DN*. III, pp. 142-79.

[14] *VP*. III, p. 222.

[15] *VP*. III, p. 47.

[16] *J*. II, p. 2; IV, p. 370; V, pp. 98-99.

Another passage likens kings to a paramount bull controlling whether or not the herd will cross a stream or drown in it.[17]

The contractual nature of the idea of kingship in the Mahāsammata legend has nothing at all to do with its deification; however, the tendency observed generally in ancient India to view kings as having supernatural powers definitely influenced Buddhists as well. One example of this is the idea of *cakravartin*, which will be discussed later. There is also the common expression, "The just and unjust actions of kings move even the world of nature." To be more specific,

1) When kings govern properly, the rain falls at the right time, fruits and vegetables become sweet and are filled with nutrition.
2) When kings govern unjustly, the rain falls unpredictably, the kingdom is stricken by starvation, plague and the sword, and fruits and vegetables are not filled with sweetness and nutrition.[18]

1) Unjust kings lead to unjust officials, brāhmaṇas and *gahapatis*, which in turn lead to unjust urbanites and rural residents. This leads to irregular movements of the sun, moon, and the stars, irregular changes between night and day, moons and half-moons; yearly and seasonal cycles become irregular, the wind blows irregularly, the gods are angered, the rain falls unpredictably, the grain does not ripen, people's longevity is shortened, their color worsens, they become weak and more prone to sickness.
2) Kings who rule in accordance with the *dharma* lead to righteous officials ... the rain falls at the right time, the grain ripens, people live longer, they are handsome, strong and healthy.[19]

The cause and effect relationship between royal politics and rainfall was popularly believed in ancient India. According to one *Jātaka*, at one time after three years without rain and the advent of famine, a crowd of people gathered before the palace and called on the king to make it rain.[20] The king then decided to govern in accordance with the *dharma*; the rain fell, the famine was ended and the kingdom returned to its former prosperity.[21] Here is an example of the auspicious existence of kings, but their auspiciousness was only effective on the condition that they gov-

[17] *AN*. II, pp. 75-76. *J*. III, p. 111; V, p. 242.

[18] *J*. I, p. 336; II, pp. 124, 371-72; III, pp. 110-11.

[19] *AN*. II, p. 74-75. We change *rājaputta* of the text to *rājayutta* (king's officials).

[20] *J*. V, pp. 193-94. See also, *J*. II, pp. 367-68; VI, p. 487.

[21] *J*. II, p. 381. In the *Rāmāyana* (*Uttarakāṇḍa*, 73-76), the story of the killing of Śambūka tells of the relationship between disaster and corrupt kings from the standpoint of orthodox thought. According to the story, there was a brāhmaṇa who brought his dead son to Rāma's palace, complaining that the king was responsible for the boy's death. Rāma then conducted an investigation of the matter and discovered that a certain śūdra by the name Śambūka had been performing ascetic acts by a pond, of course in defiance of varṇa law. As soon as Rāma beheaded Śambūka, the dead boy returned to life.

erned in accordance with the *dharma*.

According to orthodox ideas, it was brāhmaṇas who as priests mobilized the gods to benefit the people, while the role of kings was to sponsor state ceremonies, mobilizing brāhmaṇas for the sake of fertility and prosperity. However, the Buddha argued that such ceremonies, which victimized animals, were not only ritually meaningless, but also sinful.[22]

As we have seen, the contractual theory of kingship legitimizes the dethroning of kings who neglected their duties, and the *Jātakas* mention kings who were brought down by their subjects or ministers.[23] We also find the view that unjust kings would be perished by divine punishment,[24] or they would not only bring their own ruin in this world, but also go to hell in the next.[25] This aspect is similar to what we have found in the orthodox literature on the subject.

Regarding the importance of legal aspects of the king's duty to protect his subjects, we find in the *Jātakas* such accounts as ministers testing the ability of a prince to make legal decisions before allowing him to ascend the throne;[26] and there are many examples of kings presiding personally at trials and issuing their decisions either on their own or with the advice of their ministers or appointed judges. These accounts demand that kings be fair in their judgements and that they avoid both anger and hasty decision-making.[27]

Punishment and war ordered by kings involved the sinful acts of killing and maiming, which is one of the reasons why in orthodox thought kings were dealt with as sinful figures in addition to being majestic, divine beings. According to the Buddhist view, "As the result of reigning for twenty years, the king had to suffer in Ussada hell for 80,000 years."[28] Although it was necessary for kings to exercise military force to protect their subjects from external enemies, that same force was often used for the sake of territorial expansion. As a definition of the desire on the part of kings to conquer we find "Kings use their strength to conquer the earth up to the coastline and still are not satisfied, desiring what is beyond the sea."[29] Kings could strike fear into the hearts of their subjects, and one Buddhist source cites the king as the first of eight possible ways to harm any household.[30] Another warns that

[22] See p. 36 of this volume.
[23] *J*. I, p. 326; III, pp. 513-14; V, p. 470.
[24] *J*. II, pp. 124, 172; III, pp. 455-60.
[25] *J*. III, pp. 459-60; V, p. 99.
[26] *J*. II, pp. 264, 297-300.
[27] *J*. I, pp. 176-77; II, p. 1; III, p. 105.
[28] *J*. VI, pp. 4, 20.
[29] *MN*. II, p. 72.
[30] The others include theft, fire, water, forgetfulness, indigence, waste, uncertainty (*SN*. IV, pp. 324-25). One source cites three causes: the king, theft and fire (*SN*. I, p. 32), another six: fire, water, the king, theft, enemies, and heirs (*AN*. III, p. 45).

no matter how small they may be, kings (kṣatriyas), snakes, fire and *bhikkhus* should never be ridiculed, for such an action could be the cause of serious calamity.[31]

The Buddhist literature often refers to the king's duty to give religious alms, charitable donations and congratulatory awards to those who deserve them, mentioning such things as villages (i.e. the right to collect taxes from villages), land, gold, male and female slaves, domestic animals, grain, and clothing. Members of the Buddhist *saṅgha* were also given land, buildings and slaves for their monasteries, in addition to such everyday items as clothing, food, medicine and furnishings. Relief to the poor was argued as an indispensable obligation in the royal duty to protect the people. The *Jātakas* have stories about kings who erected facilities for almsgiving (*dānasālā*) around their cities at such locations as the four city gates, central plazas and in front of the palace.[32] The recipients of awards ranged from the members of the royal family, ministers and presiding priests to hunters and hairdressers, even elephants and peacocks. One of the most extraordinary cases involved the bestowal of a large portion of the kingdom (one-half; one-third) to virtuous and distinguished persons.[33]

3. The King and the *Saṅgha*

As indicated by the choice Gotama faced between the role of *cakravartin* (an ideal king) and life as a buddha, the secular world headed by kings and the world of renunciation represented by the Buddha were in principle completely separated modes of existence. The Buddhist *saṅgha* was an autonomous group governed by the rules of discipline contained in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. Any member (*bhikkhu*) guilty of a major crime in the secular world, like theft or murder, would be permanently exiled from the community. While it is difficult to say whether such offenders would be subject to punishment a second time in the secular world, even if they were subject to punishment by the king, in theory, it was none of the *saṅgha*'s business.

According to the traditions contained in early Buddhist scripture, like the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, the Buddha forbade his followers from approaching the king and discussing politics with anyone. However, in reality, the *saṅgha* could not have existed without material support from the secular world; consequently, various issues arose involving it and kingship. One is indicated by an anecdote contained in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. On the occasion of enthronement, the king bestowed grass,

[31] *SN*. I, p. 69.
[32] *J*. II, p. 367; IV, pp. 355, 402; VI, pp. 96-97.
[33] *J*. I, p. 446; III, p. 11.

trees and water on brāhmaṇas and world renunciators (*samaṇa*). One *bhikkhu*, believing that he was entitled to such gifts, went to a royal storehouse for lumber to be used in the case of disaster and openly took the wood to build his hut. As a result, he was publicly chastised and also scolded by the Buddha himself for behavior equivalent to theft.[34] In fact, the king's gesture applied to the grass, wood and water in the forest, which was not being used by anyone; for in ancient India it was generally recognized that the king, or the state, was the de facto owner of the forests and lakes within the territory. The Buddha's reprimand was more in line with his prohibition on any of his followers becoming involved with the king in any way.

Another item in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* prohibits encouraging royal retainers to renounce the world. This was a rule made by the Buddha himself on the occasion of retainers renouncing the world without the king's permission, which was a serious crime in the secular world.[35] The Buddha then proceeded to censure the *bhikkhus*, who had been negligent (or ignorant) enough to assist the retainers. Other persons who were not to be initiated into the *saṅgha* were criminals, debtors and slaves, for the reason that any potential friction with the secular world was to be avoided for the sake of the group's autonomy.[36] However, despite such efforts on the part of the *saṅgha*, direct intervention by kings still occurred now and again, as related in the edicts of King Aśoka (in particular the Schism Edict), and such intervention was not limited solely to Buddhist groups, but Jainist and Brahmanist ones as well.

4. The Ideal King

As to the criteria for the ideal king, the Buddhist sources say the following.

First, the king possesses five articles that symbolize his power and authority (*pañca-rājakakudhāni*): a chowrie, a crown, a sword, an umbrella, and sandals.[37] The most important "strength (*bala*)" of an ideal king is wisdom, followed by fiscal capabilities, the skills of his ministers, upbringing, and physical prowess (*pañca-balāni*).[38] Another passage lists eight elements essential to any king: pure blood, good looks, wealth, four strong armies, faith and generosity, knowledge, understanding of words, and sagacity.[39] The quality of any king was determined by his

[34] *VP*. III, pp. 42-45.
[35] *VP*. I, pp. 73-74. A teacher (*upajjhāya*) who persuaded a royal retainer to renounce the world being beheaded, assistant teacher (*anussāvaka*) having his tongue cut out and their community (*gaṇa*) having their ribs cracked (*VP*. I, p. 74).
[36] *VP*. I, pp. 74-77.
[37] *J*. IV, p. 151; V, p. 264.
[38] *J*. V, pp. 120-21.
[39] *DN*. I, p. 137.

age, size of his territory, military strength, wealth, prestige, family origins, lineage, family, social position, and virtue.[40] Furthermore, there are ten kinds of conduct that will determine a king's happy rebirth: whether he has dealt with in accordance with the *dharma* his father and mother, wives and children, friends and retainers, mounts and troops, villages and towns, territory and regions, world renunciators (*samaṇa*) and brāhmaṇas, and birds and animals, whether he has gained happiness by executing the law, and whether he will be reborn as a god in either Indra's or Brahman's world.[41] "In accordance with the *dharma*" means with a fair, unselfish, benevolent heart free of prejudice. A king was also supposed to be earnest; if he was seen to be energetic in his activities, his queens, his retainers and his subjects would follow suit and the foundations of prosperity for all would be laid.[42]

What was particularly emphasized as the key to ideal kings was the *dasa-rājadhammā* (ten royal *dharmas*): "he ruled his country properly by not upsetting the *dasa-rājadhammā*," as the *Jātakas* often put it.[43] They are almsgiving, observance of moral precepts, hearty donations, honesty, warmth, effort, forbearance, mercy, tolerance, and gentleness.[44] In one tale, there is an account of an ideal king who broke nary one of these *dharmas* and also followed the five moral commandments (*pañca-sīlāni*), called "the *dharmas* of the Kurus," which prohibited killing, stealing, adultery, lying, and drunkenness.[45] In other words, the ideal king was conceived of as a ruler who did not use violence, was highly self-disciplined, and reigned by means of intelligence, virtue and compassion. Setting aside the question of whether or not such a thing was possible in reality, the image contrasts sharply with the orthodox brāhmaṇa ideal of kingship based on the *daṇḍa* (penal and military power), which kings implement in protecting their subjects.

We also find in the *Jātakas* one tale that compares good and bad kings.[46]

> *Behavior unbecoming a king*: lying, anger, jocularity, indolence, jealousy, wickedness, ...
> *Behavior befitting a king*: good heart, staunch heart, effort, tolerance, earnestness, and knowing how to 1) obtain what he needs and keep what he has, 2) utilize wise and capable retainers, 3) conduct fiscal affairs properly, 4) praise good and punish evil, and 5) benefit his subjects and never victimize them, thus acting on the strength of wisdom and ruling in accordance with the *dharma*, ...

[40] *J*. II, p. 3.
[41] *J*. V, pp. 123-24; VI, pp. 94-95.
[42] *SN*. I, p. 89.
[43] *J*. II, pp. 118, 367, 400-01; IV, pp. 176, 370, 402.
[44] *J*. III, pp. 273-74; V, p. 378.
[45] *J*. II, p. 367.
[46] *J*. V, pp. 112-25. See also *J*. VI, pp. 252-53.

A more concrete picture of a good king can be found in the *Kūṭadanta-suttanta*, in which the Buddha admonishes a despotic monarch, telling him that he is not entitled to tax his subjects due to the troubles he has caused. And after criticizing the terrible ways the king used to rule over the people (arrest, exile and punishment), the Buddha makes the following recommendation.

> Provide your peasants and herders with seed and fodder, your merchants with capital, and your administrators with food and stipends. Do this and your subjects will see to their own occupations and not disturb your kingdom, but rather enrich you. Your kingdom will be at peace, free of calamity; your subjects will happily let their children play on their chests and never need to lock their doors again.[47]

The possible life cycle of any king that appears in the *Jātakas* can be arranged into the following six stages.

1) Born to the paramount queen of the household.
2) Travel abroad to study after reaching adulthood.
3) Appointed vice-king (*uparājā*) after returning home.
4) After enthronement upon the death or retirement of the former monarch, rules the people properly.
5) Renounces the world after enthroning his son or handing the government over to his ministers.
6) After death, enters Brahmaloka if he renounced the world, or heaven (*sagga*) if not.

Although differing in detail, the descriptions in the *Jātakas* concerning the lives

Life Patterns of Kings Described in the *Jātakas*

Combination	*Jātaka* No.
1)→ 2)→ → 4)→ 5)→ 6)	282, 355, 378, 525, 529.
1)→ → 3)→ 4)→ 5)→ 6)	9, 541.
1)→ 2)→ 3)→ 4)	50, 276, 310, 338, 353, 373, 411, 415, 416, 468, 499, 530.
1)→ 2)→ → 4)	55, 100, 151, 160, 252, 260, 262, 269, 289, 349, 456, 489, 524, 527, 537, 542.
1)→ → 3)→ 4)	258, 539.
1)→ → → 4)→ 5)→ 6)	303, 406, 459, 498, 539.
1)→ → → 4)	6, 51, 62, 96, 132, 191, 193, 240, 257, 327, 347, 420, 421, 424, 458, 489, 494, 513, 531, 545, 547.

Note: Missing numbers indicate either skipped stages or lack of information.

[47] *DN*. I, p. 135.

of kings consist of various combinations of the above six stages. In terms of the four stages (*āśrama*) of life, 2) corresponds to the student stage, 3) and 4) to the householder stage, and 5) to the forest-dwelling and mendicancy stages. Here is a list of the patterns found.

5. *Cakravartin*

The ideal king who met the above criteria and ruled his subjects in accordance with the *dharma* was called *cakravartin* (*cakkavattin*), literally, the king who sets the wheel rolling. What exactly that wheel was is explained in various ways, like 1) a chariot wheel representing Indra's ability to conquer, 2) the Sun that lights and warms the entire world, 3) the discus used by Indra and Viṣṇu as a weapon, 4) a *maṇḍala* that expands out like a circle, 5) sovereignty that spreads out from the nucleus to the periphery, and 6) the circumference of the Earth.[48] In any case, there is no doubt that the wheel symbolizes the unlimited sovereignty of *cakravartin* to rule over the Earth. As early as the Vedic Age, the wheel had become the symbol of conquest and power, and we find the concept of *cakravartin* in orthodox Brahmanic thought. But it was not until the rise of Jainism and Buddhism, especially the latter, that the idea was fully developed.[49] The concept can be found scattered throughout Buddhist scripture, but three *suttantas* in the *Dīgha-Nikāya* are most important: namely, the *Cakkavatti-Sīhanāda-suttanta*,[50] *Lakkhaṇa-suttanta*[51] and *Mahā-Sudassana-suttanta*.[52] What these three works say about *cakravartin* can be summed up as follows.[53]

The world constantly repeats a cycle of prosperity and decline, rise and fall. In times of prosperity human longevity will reach 80,000 years, but as humans lose merit, their life spans grow shorter, and when all that is good is lost during the dark

[48] The meaning of *cakravartin* is discussed in O. H. De A. Wijesekara, "The Symbolism of the Wheel in the Cakravartin Concept," *S. K. Belvalkar Felicitation Volume*, Banaras, 1957, pp. 262-67. J. Gonda, *Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View*, pp. 123-28. H. Scharfe, *The State in Indian Tradition*, pp. 51-55. U. Chakravarti, *The Social Dimensions of Early Buddhism*, Delhi, 1987, pp. 150-76.

[49] A concise explanation of the development of the concept can be found in *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (J. Hastings ed.), Vol. III, pp. 336-37.

[50] *DN*. III, pp. 58-79.

[51] *DN*. III, pp. 142-79.

[52] *DN*. II, pp. 169-99.

[53] Important works in the Chinese *Tripiṭaka* are; *Chuan-lun shêng-wang-hsiu-hsing-ching*, *Taishō*, I, pp. 39a-42b. *Shih-chi-ching* (*chuan-lun-shêng-wang-p'in*), *Taishō*, I, pp. 119b-21b. *Ta-lou-t'an ching* (*chuan-lun-wang-p'in*), *Taishō*, I, pp. 281a-83b. *Ch'i-shih-ching* (*chuan-lun-shêng-wang p'in*), *Taishō*, I, pp. 317a-20b. *Ch'i-shih-yin-pêng-ching* (*chuan-lun-wang p'in*), *Taishō*, I, pp. 372b-75c. *Chuan-lun-wang-ching*, *Taishō*, I, pp. 520b-25a.

age, life lasts for no more than ten years. Then the goodness of man starts to recover, and an era of life at 80,000 comes once again. It is during this era of prosperity that *cakravartins* rise up to rule the world.[54] They appear as the result of the good *karma* of their previous births, and they are characterized by thirty-two auspicious physical traits, the same as the Buddha.[55] The *cakravartin* has been blessed with seven treasures (*satta-ratanāni*) and over a thousand princes of unmatched bravery, ruling up to the four seas, not with military might, but with the might of the *dharma*.[56]

The seven treasures can be described as follows.[57]

1) *Cakkaratana*, a wheel that rolls in all four directions allowing kings to pacify the world.[58]
2) *Hatthiratana*, a pure white elephant that has the supernatural ability to fly.
3) *Assaratana*, a white horse able to fly.
4) *Maṇiratana*, a shining jewel which can throw light a distance up to one *yojana*.
5) *Itthiratana*, a beautiful, fragrant, obedient, pure queen.
6) *Gahapatiratana*, a wealthy citizenry with the wherewithal to pay all the kingdom's fiscal expenses.
7) *Pariṇāyakaratana*, wise, capable, and highly experienced military generals.

It is said that *cakravartins* also meet all of the following criteria.

A. The Four *Iddhis* (miraculous blessings)[59]
Good looks, long life, mental and physical health, and respect from

[54] In the *Mahā-Sudassana-suttanta*, the splendor of the capital city is described (*DN*. II, pp. 170-72; 178-85). As to longevity, the *cakravartin* lives for 84,000 years in each of his reigns as crown prince, vice-king and king (*J*. II, p. 311). One tale adds 84,000 years of asceticism (*DN*. II, p. 196).
[55] Those who renounce the world with these traits become buddhas, those who do not become *cakravartins*. See the *Lakkhaṇa-suttanta* and also *DN*. II, pp. 16-19.
[56] *DN*. I, pp. 88-89; II, pp. 16-17; III, pp. 59-63, 75, 142, 145, 177. *AN*. IV, pp. 89-91, etc. See also next note 57.
[57] *DN*. II, pp. 172-77. *MN*. III, pp. 172-76. *Taishō*, I, pp. 39b-40a, 119b-20c, 281a-82c, 372b-74b, 520b-c, 524c.
[58] Later Buddhists would divide the wheel into four types: gold, silver, copper and iron. The gold wheel was for kings who ruled all four great islands in the sea around Mt. Sumeru; the silver one was for those who ruled three of them; the copper one for those who ruled two; and the iron one for those who ruled only Jambudvīpa. As to the relationship between the islands and *cakravartins*, the clearest explanation can be found at the beginning of Volume I of Xuanzang (Hsüan-chuang)'s *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions* (Li Rongxi tr., Tokyo, 1996, pp. 17-18).
[59] *DN*. II, pp. 177-78. *MN*. III, pp. 176-77. The *Ch'i-shih-yin-pêng-ching* lists the four supernatural powers of a *cakravartin* as 1) eternal life, 2) physical and mental health, 3) handsome

brāhmaṇas and *gahapatis*.

B. The Four *Acchariya-abbhuta-dhammas* (rare and mysterious attributes)[60]
1) kṣatriyas, 2) brāhmaṇas, 3) *gahapatis*, and 4) *samaṇas* will all be joyous when granted an audience with the king and when hearing him speak, and will never grow tired of him even if he should become silent.

C. The Five *Aṅgas* (limbs)[61]
Knowledge of 1) reason, 2) the *dharma*, 3) quantity, 4) time and 5) the people.

D. The Five *Aṅgas*[62]
Pure, pedigreed blood, wealth, strength and four strong disciplined armies, wise and intelligent military generals, and honor-distinction.

Among all of the above criteria, however, not one reference is made to the divinity of kingship, in accordance with the Buddhist concept of the ideal king seen in the previous section.

When those qualified to be *cakravartins* would ascend the upper floor of the palace on the evening of the full moon following the *abhiṣeka* coronation ceremony, the wheel, skillfully crafted with one thousand spokes, would suddenly appear from heaven suspended in the air. The king's conquest would then begin with his four armies marching east, south, west and north behind the wheel. All of the kings in its path would surrender without a struggle, and the earth up to the four seas would come under the rule of the *cakravartin*. After the conquest, the wheel would return with the *carkravartin* to his palace and remain suspended in the air.[63] It was in this way that the *cakravartin* became the paramount ruler over the world's lesser kings.[64]

One of the earliest works in Pāli scripture, the *Suttanipāta*, calls the *cakravartin* "lord of the earth" (*Jambusaṇḍassa issara*), "king of kings" (*rājābhirājā*), and "emperor over the whole human race" (*manujinda*).[65] While the terms *issara* and *inda* (*Īśvara* and *Indra*) are usually reserved for the greatest of all the gods, here they are used to indicate the greatest man in the human race. *Cakravartins* are also said to have been surrounded by a circle of retainers thirty-six *yojanas* in circumference[66] and that the relationship to their subjects was one of

features, and 4) material endowment. See *Taishō*, I, p. 374b-c. See also, *Taishō*, I, pp. 120c, 282c, 319b.
[60] *AN*. II, p. 133.
[61] *AN*. III, pp. 147-48.
[62] *AN*. III, p. 151.
[63] See notes 56 and 57.
[64] *AN*. III, p. 365; V, p. 22.
[65] *Suttanipāta*, vv. 552-53.
[66] *J*. IV, p. 232. In addition, about their large entourages, elephants, horses, vehicles, wives, jewelry and cloth, see *DN*. II, pp. 185-98.

benevolence and respect, like a father to his children.[67]

Cakravartins are often referred to as "*cakkavatti dhammiko dhammarājā*" to emphasize their position as ideal kings who ruled in accordance with the *dharma*. We find the following expression.

> The *cakravartins* rely on the *dharma*, respect it, emphasize it, worship it, adopt it as their standards and their emblems, and make it first and foremost in all affairs. They guard, shelter and protect their kṣatriyas, personal retainers, armies, brāhmaṇas and *gahapatis*, urbanites and rural dwellers, *samaṇas* and brāhmaṇas, and birds and animals in accordance with the *dharma*.[68]

Among the *cakravartins* there were those who upon seeing the wheel moving away from the upper air of the palace, entrusted the throne to a prince and renounced the world. Seven days after doing so, the wheel would disappear altogether. When one newly enthroned prince complained to his father about that occurrence, he was told that the wheel was not a family treasure handed down from generation to generation, but a private possession obtained through merit. The new king then began to rule in accordance with the *dharma*, and on the evening of the next full moon, the wheel returned to its former place. When an era of *cakravartins* came to an end, people would begin gradually losing their virtue and the world would fall into decline once again.[69]

Of those *cakravartins* who did not renounce the world but lived out their lives as kings, upon their deaths, their corpses would be handled like that of the Buddha, wrapped in five hundred layers of white cloth by their queens, citizens, generals and others, then cremated. Their ashes would be placed in large *stūpas* constructed at the crossroads of a major roadway. People would come to offer flowers and burn incense in the hope of merit and comfort in the present and future worlds. Seven days after the death of a *cakravartin*, the wheel, elephant, horse and gem would all disappear suddenly, and the other three treasures more gradually.[70]

The similarities between the *cakravartin* and the Buddha did not stop at funereal rites, but also included 1) their purpose of appearing in the world to give merit and comfort to both the human race and the gods, 2) their rare and extraordinary occurrence, 3) the enormous amount of grief that was generated by their deaths, 4) the huge religious value in building *stūpas* in their names.[71] The fate of *cakravartins*

[67] See *Taishō*, I, pp. 120c, 282c-83a, 319c, 374c.
[68] *AN*. I, pp. 109-10. Also see *AN*. III, pp. 149-50. *DN*. III, p. 61.
[69] *DN*. III, pp. 59-73. *Taishō*, I, pp. 39b-41b, 520b-22b.
[70] *DN*. II, pp. 141-43, 161. *Taishō*, I, pp. 121a-b, 283a-b, 320a-b, 375b-c.
[71] *AN*. I, pp. 76-77. One source lists 1) *tathāgato*, *arahaṃ*, *sammāsambuddha*, 2) *pacceka-buddha*, 3) the disciples of *tathāgata-sāvaka* and 4) *rājā-cakkavattī* as those deserving *stūpas* (*DN*. II, pp. 142-43).

after their deaths was to be reborn into Brahmaloka, or the world of the gods, but there they too were mortal beings; and at the end of their lives they would fall from heaven and be reborn into other worlds, like the human world. After stating that even *cakravartins* cannot escape reincarnation, one source adds that the enlightenment sought by *bhikkhus* is far superior to either Brahmaloka or the world of the gods.

> After freely ruling the Four Islands, upon their aging and death, *cakravartins* are reborn into Paradise, where they reside with the gods, are surrounded by heavenly women in the Rejoicing Garden, enjoy a life of comfort satisfying their five heavenly desires. However, they have not yet completed the four *dharmas* and are by no means exempt from rebirth in hell, rebirth as beasts, rebirth into the world of the *pretas*... However, the disciples of holy men are all exempt [from such fates].[72]

Nakamura Hajime is of the opinion that 1) the mythology regarding such an ideal monarch appeared after the Mauryan Dynasty's attempt at empire-building and 2) the mythology reflects the figure of King Aśoka.[73] In contrast, D. R. Bhandarkar argues that the attempts made by King Aśoka to govern according to the *dharma* were motivated by the idea of *cakravartin* described in Buddhist literature.[74] I myself believe that the solution to the problem probably lies somewhere in between these two views. That is to say, first, the concept of a king who would rule the world on earth, *samrāj*, was already being developed during the Vedic Age and was lent a certain reality with the establishment of the Mauryan Dynasty. Secondly, prior to Aśoka's reign, Buddhists, in particular, were already expressing a yearning for ideal kings who would "roll the *dharma*," and Aśoka sought to realize such ideals during his reign. Finally, the concept of *cakravartin* was developed and was then incorporated as a theme in Buddhist scripture.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, the following points have become clear about the idea of kingship contained in the Buddhist sources.

1) Kings were placed at the nucleus of the state and their main duties were to

[72] *SN*. V, p. 342.
[73] H. Nakamura, *Religion and Social Ethics: A Theoretical Approach* (in Japanese), Tokyo, 1959, pp. 192-98.
[74] D. R. Bhandarkar, *Aśoka*, 3rd ed., Calcutta, 1955, pp. 202-07. Also see H. Scharfe, *op. cit.*, pp. 218-20, 225-26.

protect the people and maintain law and order. In the former duty, emphasis was placed on a king's religious generosity and his support of the weaker members of society.

2) In order to fulfill their duties, kings were given the right to punish and to employ armed force; however, at the same time, kings were, in principle, expected to rule their subjects non-violently, with self-restraint and with the benevolence a father shows towards his children. On the other hand, kings were sometimes regarded as sinful from the standpoint of *ahiṃsā*.
3) From the viewpoint of social contract, the right of kings to tax their subjects was seen as the quid pro quo for protecting them. Therefore, the ouster of kings who failed to rule in accordance with the law was fully recognized.
4) The *dharma* (universal righteousness) was placed as the highest authority in the normal rule of law, and the fate of the kingdom was determined by whether or not the king acted in accordance with the *dharma*. Also from the viewpoints of *karma* and *saṃsāra*, successful kings would be born into heaven, failures condemned to hell.
5) The existence of the varṇa system was recognized in the Buddhist sources; however, kings were expected to implement the universal *dharma* as the rule of law rather than in accordance with the Vedic *dharma*, which was based on social discrimination. It was also recognized that even non-kṣatriyas could accede to the throne, if they were virtuous men.
6) We do find some recognition of beliefs that kings possessed supernatural powers, but the divine nature of kingship was refuted.
7) Although there is mention of Brahmanic ceremonies and sorcery being connected to kingship, their effectiveness was refuted in favor of intelligence and virtue as the elements most desirable in conducting politics.
8) The secular world placed under the rule of kingship was to be separated from the world of renunciators, and the former was expected never to interfere in the affairs of the latter and vice versa.
9) It was hoped that the ideal king, *cakravartin*, would appear to integrate the world here on earth.
10) We also find attention being made to the bureaucracy and military component that supported kingship and made it work properly.

The above version of kingship was also adopted by Mahāyāna Buddhist thought, but at the time of rise of this new trend, the Brahmanic concepts of divine kings and the absolute nature of royal authority were also being introduced into it. In addition, scripture that aimed at protecting the state mainly through magical means (esoteric Buddhism) was also being compiled.

Appendix: A Comparative Study of the Idea of Kingship*

Now let us see how the orthodox idea of ancient Indian kingship described in Chapter V matches up with both the Buddhist idea discussed in this chapter and the idea contained in the *Arthaśāstra*. Historically, kingship in ancient India developed in three stages; from chieftainship during the Early Vedic Age, through a phase of tribal kings during the Later Vedic Age to a more despotic form in the Post-Vedic Age. The type of kingship described here belongs to the third stage of development.

The following twelve points summarize, in my estimation, the common views held on kingship among the above three literary sources. Accordingly, we may postulate that these points constitute the basic ancient Indian concept of kingship.

1. The king has supreme power over the secular world and serves at the summit of the state; the destiny of the state depends on his abilities and actions.
2. The king is required to govern in accordance with the *dharma*, regardless of how it is defined.
3. The most important duty of the king is to protect his subjects and maintain social and political order; the duty of protecting brāhmaṇas, religious mendicants and religious sects is also stressed.
4. The king is required to have paternal love towards his subjects.
5. The king has been given the *daṇḍa*, the rod symbolising his judicial and military power, to enable him to fulfill his duties. This *daṇḍa* sometimes inspires fear in his subjects.
6. The king has the right to collect taxes and take his share (*bhāga*) as remuneration for fulfilling his duties.
7. Mistaken policies are regarded as neglect of the king's duties, and in such a case the execution or banishment of an unjust king is approved.
8. The king is required to possess dignity and ability suitable to his rank, and to act accordingly; kṣatriya-varṇa origins are desirable, but are not an absolute precondition.
9. The king is believed to be a man of good fortune who is able to bring prosperity to his people through his mystical powers.
10. The king must respect tradition and he should endeavor not to destroy the indigenous traditional order of another country after conquering it; he should be sufficiently satisfied with the submission of his enemy kings.

* This Appendix is the summary of my article "Kingship in Ancient India as Described in Literary Sources and Inscriptions," *Kingship in Indian History* (ed. N. Karashima), New Delhi, 1999, pp. 17-36.

11. The king, ruling under the yoke of *karma* and *saṃsāra*, is destined to go either to heaven or hell according to his acts; the king who governs righteously acquires not only his own religious merit but also a part of the merit accumulated by his subjects, but if he governs unrighteously, he receives the same amount of religious demerit.
12. Kingship functions effectively with the help of the bureaucracy and military.

The following six points summarize the views contradictorily held by the three above-mentioned literary sources.

13. Kingship was created by God and was granted to human beings, i.e. God created the original king (*Dharmaśāstras*); kingship was given by the people to the first ruler through some kind of social contract (Buddhist literature). The king's *daṇḍa* and his right of tax collection were originally given by God (*Dharmaśāstras*), or given by the people (Buddhist literature). Accordingly, the king must be charged with the crime of his misrule ultimately to God (*Dharmaśāstras*) or to the people (Buddhist literature). *Arthaśāstra*'s standpoint on this subject is not clear, but is somewhat closer to that of the Buddhist literature.
14. The king is deified (*Dharmaśāstras*); he is not deified (Buddhist literature). Special rituals performed by brāhmaṇas, whose ritual status is higher than the king, are indispensable for his deification. Buddhists' ideal king *cakravartin* is described to have unlimited virtue, not divinity. In the *Arthaśāstra*, the king is required to govern practically and rationally, his deification being utilised only as a temporary expedient.
15. The *dharma* is based on the Vedic or Brahmanical *dharma* (*Dharmaśāstras*); the *dharma* is based on the universal law (Buddhist literature). Vedic *dharma* which surpasses the king's authority has been handed down by brāhmaṇas, so that the king must obey their teachings not only religiously but also politically. The *dharma* of the *Arthaśāstra* is closer to that of the *Dharmaśāstras*, but in this source the king's order sometimes surpasses the dignity of the *dharma*. The ideal order of society is that of the *varṇa-āśrama*, i.e. the four fundamental castes and four stages of life (*Dharmaśāstras*, *Arthaśāstra*), or that of universal law (Buddhist literature).
16. Policy via the skillful use of *daṇḍa* is recommended (*Dharmaśāstras Arthaśāstra*); a non-*daṇḍa* policy is extoled (Buddhist literature).
17 Ritual purity is required of the king (*Dharmaśāstras*); ethical purity is recommended (Buddhist literature). *Dharmaśāstras* explain that the ritual purity of the king who is doing his duty righteously is equal to that of brāhmaṇas who are conducting their religious ceremony.
18 Importance of the king's attachment to sacrificial rites for the prosperity of his kingdom is emphasized (*Dharmaśāstras*); the king is recommended to use the rites as a form of political tactic (*Arthaśāstra*); sacrificial rites are seen as ineffective and sinful (Buddhist literature).

Concerning the above contradictory views on kingship (items 13-18), we find two extreme views, one orthodox, the other unorthodox. The standpoint of the *Arthaśāstra*, roughly speaking, holds a ground between these two.

Of course, all of the attributes of kingship mentioned in these three groups of source materials remain in the world of theory and have little relevance to the sphere of *Realpolitik*. This is why I have also had the occasion to compare these aspects with what the epigraphy from the reigns of Kings Aśoka, Khāravela, Rudradāman and Samudragupta has to say about the subject. What I have found is this.

1) All four kings tended to act in accordance with the "basics of ancient Indian kingship" represented by the features common to the three theoretical approaches (Table I).
2) The "epigraphic" version of kingship was definitely conceived within the range demarcated by the two extremes of the orthodox (Hindu) and unorthodox (Buddhist) arguments. Closest to the unorthodox extreme is Aśoka, while Samudragupta tends to lean closest to the orthodox extreme, with the remaining two kings falling somewhere in between (Table II).

TABLE I: Inscription Content and Common Views of Kingship (Items 1-12)

Common views	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Aśoka	○	○	○	○	○	□	○	○	○	○	○	○
Khāravela	○	○	○	○	○	△		○	○	△	△	□
Rudradāman	○	○	○	○	○	□	○	○	○	○	△	○
Samudragupta	○	□	○	○	○	△		○	○	○	○	□

○ Reference □ Small reference △ Vague refernce

TABLE II: Inscription Content and Contradictory Views of Kingship

Contradictory views	Orthodox ⟷ Unorthodox
Aśoka	○ □ △ ⊗ ×
Khāravela	△ ○ □ ⊗ ×
Rudradāman	□ △ × ⊗ ○
Samudragupta	○ □ △ × ⊗

○ Divinity (items 13, 14)
□ The *dharma* (item 15)
△ The *daṇḍa* (item 16)
⊗ Purity (item 17)
× Sacrifice (item 18)

Part Three THE VAIŚYA: CITIZENS AND PEASANTS

The third ranked varṇa in ancient India, vaiśya, was a class whose obligations (*sva-dharma*) involved the occupations of cultivator, herder and merchant. The etymology of "vaiśya" originates with the term "*viś*," which in early Vedic times referred to the general rank and file of Aryan tribal society. With the formation of varṇa society, vaiśya came to mean the commoner, freeman class, whose duty it was to support the two ruling varṇas (brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas) through their economic activities. However, due to the fact that vaiśyas originated as a part of Aryan tribal society, they were considered to be the twice-born (*dvija*) and entitled to receive religeous teachings and services of brāhmaṇas. Therefore, young vaiśya men were to be initiated and enter a student phase, learning the Veda under the tutelage of brāhmaṇa teachers and then become householders entitled to perform their own Vedic rituals in their homes. Nevertheless, their student phase was probably dominated more by learning a profession than Vedic studies, and as householders, their participation in religious life was fairly limited. They were also singled out from the upper two classes in all facets of life, including age of initiation, the clothing they were allowed to wear during the student phase, methods of purification, and severity of punishment.

The *Manu-smṛti* (IX, 326-33), after explaining that the vaiśya varṇa was charged by the creator Prajāpati with the obligation to engage in herding and commerce (and cultivation), lays down following five clauses.

> A [vaiśya] should be familiar with the price differences concerning gems, pearls, coral, metals, cloth, perfume and spices; should know how to sow seed properly and understand differences in land fertility, know all about weights and measures; know the quality of commodities, the advantages and disadvantages of each region, profit and loss on merchandise and how to raise animals; know the wages of hired laborers, various languages of people, how to preserve goods and how to buy and sell; do all he can to increase his property in the proper manner and earnestly provide all living beings with nourishment.

The livelihood of the two upper varṇas and the existence of the state were to be supported by the economic efforts of the two lower vaiśya and śūdra varṇas. In the words of the *Manu-smṛti*,

> [The king] should carefully compel vaiśyas and śūdras to engage in the work [determined] for them. This is because if both varṇas were to shirk their duties,

> the world would fall into chaos (VIII, 418).
> ...[Kṣatriyas] are to defend vaiśyas with their military might and collect tax (*bali*) fairly. The commodity tax (*śulka*) from vaiśyas is one-eighth on grain and one-twentieth [on the profit on gold and cattle], the minimum amount being one *kārṣāpaṇa*. Śūdras, craftspeople and technicians are subject to corvee services [for the king] (X, 119-20).

The norms characterizing the vaiśya varṇa were to some degree ambiguous, and its composition was very diverse. There were great internal differences between rich and poor, ranging from those with wealth rivaling kṣatriyas and brāhmaṇas to those who were no better off economically than members of the śūdra varṇa.

It was members of the vaiśya varṇa who during Buddhism's formative period became very active in the middle and lower reaches of the Ganga in the midst of both urban growth and the development of agrarian society. Accordingly, the Buddhist sources document well the activities of that varṇa at the time. Here in Part Three the Pāli sources will be used to describe concretely the vaiśya merchants active in the cities and vaiśya peasants active in rural areas.

In one Buddhist source, the vaiśya (Pāli, *vessa*) varṇa as a whole is defined as "*methuna-dhammaṃ samādāya vissuta/vissa-kammante payojenti*" (those who pursue sexual desires and engage in renowned/various occupations).[1] The traditional vaiśya occupations of cultivation, herding, and commerce are also included within the category of reputable means of livelihood (*ukkaṭṭha-kamma*).[2] It should be mentioned here that dividing the vaiśyas and śūdras into two separate entities is a bit artificial, since during the time of the formation of Buddhism, the distinction between the two was quite ambiguous in the middle and lower Ganga basin, and such a trend would continue as time went on, until about the seventh century AD, when the vaiśya varṇa would come to mean the merchant class only and the śūdra varṇa peasants and craftspeople.[3]

[1] *DN*. III, p. 95.
[2] *VP*. IV, p. 6. In contrast, such occupations as serving in bathhouses and sanitation are regarded as ignominious (*hīna-kamma*).
[3] On the development of the tendency to regard commerce as the distinctive occupation of the vaiśya and agriculture as that of the śūdra, see S. Jaiswal, *Caste: Origin, Function and Dimensions of Change*, New Delhi, 1998, pp. 70-77.

Chapter VII
URBAN MERCHANTS: *GAHAPATI, SATTHAVĀHA*, AND *SEṬṬHI*

The cities of northern India during Buddhism's formative period and for a few centuries after were characterized socially and economically by those citizens called *gahapati, satthavāha*, and *seṭṭhi*, whose economic activities contributed greatly to the prosperity of their kingdoms and whose philanthropy supported the growth and development of religions like Buddhism and Jainism. In this chapter, we will first look at items in the Pāli Buddhist sources regarding how these citizens were related, then see what the Sanskrit collection of Buddhist tales, the *Divyāvadāna* (compiled around third century AD), has to say in comparison.

1. *Gahapati*

Gahapati (Skt. *gṛhapati*), means literally "master of the house," and according to one *Vinaya Piṭaka* annotation, "one who resides in lay households (*yo koci agāram ajjhāvasati*)".[4] Therefore, for those who had renounced the world, being referred to as "*gahapati*" was considered to be a serious insult.[5]

The term "*gahapati*," in addition to referring to householders in general, is also used to refer to household heads other than brāhmaṇas; for example,

> The king of Maghada, Seniya Bimbisāra, went to pay a visit to the Buddha accompanied by 120,000 brāhmaṇa and *gahapati* subjects.[6]

There is also the expression, "brāhmaṇas and *gahapatis*, urban and rural dwellers,"[7] which shows a more general usage referring to the masses in general.[8] There is also another usage separating both brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas from *gahapati* household-

[4] *VP*. III, p. 259; IV, p. 224.
[5] *MN*. I, pp. 359-60. *J*. IV, pp. 446-49.
[6] *VP*. I, p. 35.
[7] *DN*. II, p. 202. *MN*. II, pp. 74, 80; III, p. 116.
[8] Many "*brāhmaṇa-gahapatikā*" lived in the villages bestowed on brāhmaṇas by kings. *DN*. I, p. 111 ff. *MN*. I, p. 285 ff., p. 400 ff.; III, p. 290 ff. *SN*. V, p. 352 ff. *AN*. I, p. 180 ff. The term has been interpreted to mean "brāhmaṇa household heads." N. Wagle, *Society at the Time of the Buddha*, Bombay, 1966, pp. 18-19, 164-65, note 67. U. Chakravarti, *The Social*

ers; for example, "Kṣatriyas, brāhmaṇas and *gahapatis*"[9]; "Kṣatriyas, brāhmaṇas, *gahapatis* and *samaṇas*"[10]; "The king, his ministers, brāhmaṇas, *gahapatis* and heretics."[11]

However, this third usage is difficult to distinguish from a fourth meaning of "the upper class among commoners," i.e. leading (wealthy) vaiśyas. When the Pāli literature refers to *gahapati* individuals, it is usually in the sense of this fourth nuance. For example, Meṇḍaka, a *gahapati* resident of Bhaddiyangara, was the head (*pati*) of a wealthy household composed of his wife, son, son's wife and slave,[12] and another leading *gahapati*, Anāthapiṇḍika, amassed 800 million cash, while still another possessed huge amounts of cash, grain, fields, and assets, many wives and male and female slaves.[13] Such wealthy *gahapatis* formed high-class families (*ucca-kula*) rivaling wealthy kṣatriyas and brāhmaṇas,[14] into which people desired to be born in the next birth.[15] It should be mentioned that *gahapatis* appear who have fallen into poverty and who earn a livelihood working for others.[16]

Although urban merchant *gahapatis* led prosperous lives, there were cultivator (*kassaka*)-*gahapatis*, many of whom lived in rural villages, owned their own equipment, and had either slaves or hired laborers cultivate their land.[17] For example, the slave owned by previously mentioned Meṇḍaka *gahapati* was so occupied; however, exactly which varṇa, vaiśya or śūdra, these leading rural figures belonged to remains unclear. At least from the Pāli sources, it seems that in the rural societies of the middle and lower reaches of the Ganga, social distinctions between the vaiśya and śūdra varṇas had little meaning in terms of everyday life. In theory, landowning peasants were supposed to be of the vaiśya varṇa, but during the period marked by rapid social and economic development of the Ganga basin, there were probably peasants looked upon by brāhmaṇas as śūdras who prospered as

Dimensions of Early Buddhism, New Delhi, 1996, pp. 72-73. But I think it is possible to interpret the phrase as "brāhamaṇas and *gahapatis*." That is to say, the Buddha referred to the general population of such villages as "*gahapatis*," while singling out the "brāhmaṇas" among them. These *gahapatis* might have been land holding villagers who paid their taxes to the brāhmaṇas who had been granted the village (i.e. tax-collecting rights) by the king and began to reside there.

[9] *DN*. II, p. 141.

[10] *DN*. II, pp. 85, 145; III, p. 236. *MN*. I, pp. 72, 395. *AN*. II, p.133.

[11] *DN*. I, pp. 8, 67; III, p. 44. Also, *VP*. III, pp. 221-22.

[12] *VP*. I, p. 240. The *Divyāvadāna* adds a female slave to this same household, totaling six members. *Divyāv*. (Cowell and Neil ed.), pp. 123-24, 132-34.

[13] *J*. V, p. 382: *MN*. I, pp. 151-52.

[14] *AN*. II, pp. 85-86; III, pp. 385-86. In contrast, *caṇḍāla*, *nesāda*, *veṇu*, *rathakāra*, and *pukkusa* households were ignominious (*nīca-kula*). Also see p. 178 of this volume.

[15] *MN*. III, p. 177. *SN*. I, p. 95. *AN*. IV, p. 239. Also, *DN*. II, pp. 146, 169. *AN*. IV, p. 128f.

[16] *J*. III, p. 325.

[17] *AN*. I, pp. 229, 239-42.

landowners and possibly joined the ranks of rural *gahapatis*.

As we have already seen, one of the so-called seven treasures possessed by the *cakravartin* consisted of the *gahapati* who would provide him with all the goods he needed,[18] which can be interpreted as reflecting the fact that the *gahapati* class, both urban and rural, comprised the most important fiscal source for the state as taxpayers.[19] The Pāli literature contains many items concerning respectable *gahapatis* never failing to give alms to the Buddhist *saṅgha*, thus constituting along with kṣatriyas the main providers of food, clothing and shelter for *bhikkhus*. As early as the end of the nineteenth century, the research done by Richard Fick based on the Pāli sources had already determined that 1) *gahapatis* were proud of their family heritage and sought marital ties with families of similar respectability, and 2) they constituted a class rather than a caste, since they possessed no caste-type rules or conventions by which to control or chastise their fellow members.[20] Such insights have remained valid to the present day.[21]

The Pāli sources also inform us of *kuṭumbikas*, or possessors of wealth (*kuṭumba*), who resided both in the cities[22] and countryside.[23] Although it is not clear what they did for a living, it is likely that many belonged to the *gahapati* class and were probably urban merchants and moneylenders or rural landowners cultivating and managing their own estates. We also find frequent references to *kulaputta* and *kuladhītā*,[24] meaning literally the son and daughter of a household, but with the nuance of the sons and daughters from upper class families ranging from brāhmaṇas to *gahapatis*.[25]

In the *Divyāvadāna*, the term *gṛhapati* refers to the upper strata of the vaiśyas, in particular wealthy residents of urban areas whose wealth is described as consisting of large assets rivaling the richness of the wealth-god Vaiśravaṇa himself.[26] The source of such wealth is attributed to commercial activities.[27] Furthermore, they comprise one social stratum and tend to intermarry within it.[28] The general descrip-

[18] *MN*. III, p. 175.

[19] N. Wagle, *op.cit.*, p. 154.

[20] R. Fick, *The Social Organisation in North-East India in Buddha's Time*, pp. 253-57.

[21] On *gahapatis* see also, M. M. Singh, *Life in North-Eastern India in pre-Mauryan Times*, Delhi, 1967, pp. 11-13. N. Wagle, *op.cit.*, pp. 151-56. U. Chakravarti, *op.cit.*, pp. 65-93. S. Jaiswal, *op.cit.*, pp. 205-23.

[22] *J*. I, pp. 126, 270; II, pp. 239, 341, 388-89; III, p. 66; V, pp. 164, 465.

[23] *J*. I, pp. 68, 196; IV, p. 114.

[24] *J*. I, pp. 196, 257, 418, 428, 449; III, pp. 182, 422, etc.

[25] There are examples of a *kulaputta* as a brāhmaṇa (*J*. I, p. 449), a son of a *seṭṭhi-gahapati* (*VP*. I, pp. 15-16); marital relations between a *kulaputta* and a *kuṭumbika* household (*J*. I, p. 196), and a *kuladhītā* going to marry a *kulaputta* (*J*. I, p. 257; III, pp. 182, 422).

[26] *Divyāv*., pp. 1, 24, 132, 167, 191, 262, 283, 311, 330, 498, 540, etc.

[27] *Divyāv*., pp. 4, 87, 274, 301, 308, 498, 499, etc.

[28] *Divyāv*., pp. 1, 24, 87, 167, 262, 301, 311, 330, 498, 584, etc.

tions of *gṛhapati* do not differ appreciably from those of *gahapati* in the Pāli sources, except in the sense that the former is being used in a narrower sense than the latter, referring mainly to merchants in both cities and towns. However, this difference may stem merely from the fact that a large portion of the stories contained in the *Divyāvadāna* have urban settings.[29]

2. *Vāṇija* and *Satthavāha*

Vāṇija is the general term in Pāli (Skt. *vaṇij*) for merchant, and it can be assumed that *vāṇijas* mainly belonged to the vaiśya varṇa. However, we also find both peddlers[30] and wealthy maritime and overland merchants[31] among the brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas as well. As long as they engage in commerce, they are also called *vāṇijas*. The Buddhist sources relate in the words of the Buddha himself that the prosperity of cities rested on the activities of merchants as re-distributors of commodities,[32] and that the success of such activities depended on constant effort and the three criteria of 1) insight into product quality, pricing and profitability, 2) shrewdness, and 3) dependability.[33] The Buddha also tells us that while cultivation requires a great amount of physical labor to be successful, profitable commercial activities do not.[34] He is also said to have prohibited his lay followers from engaging in traffic related to swords, slaves, animal flesh, liquor and poison.[35]

The merchant class also provided economic support for the Buddhist *saṅgha*, which is the main reason why merchants frequently appear in the Pāli sources. We find those who set up shops in the cities selling grain, liquor, fruits and vegetables, and clothing,[36] which of course required that their owners sometimes go out into the countryside to purchase the goods.[37] There are also peddlers who loaded their wares on their own backs or on donkeys and hawked them through towns and villages.[38] We also find city-based entrepreneurs going into the countryside to collect debts owed them, and friendship relations existing between town-living (*nagaravāsin*) and village-living (*gāmavāsin*) merchants.[39] Regarding peddlers, we find cases of facilities being constructed at the entrance to villages for lodging them;[40] and there were also toll gates located on the trade routes they traveled.[41]

[29] The *Divyāvadāna* does contain accounts of *gṛhapatis* residing in rural villages and towns (*grāma, karvaṭaka* or *karpaṭaka*), most of them being engaged in overland or maritime trade. These villages and towns give the impression that they were large cities. *Divyāv.*, pp. 4, 87, 191, 311, 498, 584, etc.

[30] *J.* II, p. 15.

[31] *J.* IV, p. 15; V, p. 471; VI, p. 34.

[32] *DN.* I, p. 229; II, p. 87.

[33] *AN.* I, pp. 115-17. Both the Pāli sources and the *Divyāvadāna* contain the story of a merchant who used a dead rat as capital to become a millionaire. *J.* I, pp. 120-22. *Divyāv.*, pp. 498-504. Another key to success as a merchant is whether or not one gave alms to asceties and brahāmaṇas in past lives and how much was given. *AN.* II, pp. 81-82.

[34] *MN.* II, pp. 197-99.

[35] *AN.* III, p. 208.

[36] *J.* III, p. 198: *J.* I, p. 251: *J.* I, p. 411; IV, pp. 445, 448: *VP.* IV, pp. 250-52.

[37] *J.* I, p. 247.

The merchants who lived in the cities often cooperated in commercial activities. One story tells of two who invested jointly in organizing a large scale caravan, agreeing to split the profits between them.[42] Another tells of a number of merchants organizing a caravan.[43] We also find maritime commercial ventures involving joint investment in the preparation of a ship and crew.[44] Such joint ventures no doubt were embarked upon out of concerns over safety, the need for investment funds and the avoidance of unfavorable competition; however, the Pāli sources do not offer any details about such guild-like organizations.[45]

Seafaring merchants were of course constantly threatened with the possibility of being shipwrecked.[46] For their long distance voyages, they would bring birds aboard for the purpose of locating shorelines and establishing directions.[47] Ships embarked from such river ports as Bārāṇasī and Campā along the Ganga and from such sea-ports as Suppāraka and Bharukaccha on the west coast bound for destinations in Southeast Asia (Suvaṇṇabhūmi), Sri Lanka (Tambapaṇṇi) and even Babylon (Bāveru).[48] Before embarking on overseas voyages, merchants would sacrifice animals to the gods or give alms to *bhikkhus* in hope of safe journeys, and make vis-

[38] *J.* I, pp. 111, 354-55, 376; II, p. 15.

[39] *J.* II, pp. 341, 388-89, 423; III, p. 66: *J.* II, p. 181.

[40] *J.* II, pp. 109-10. *VP.* IV, p. 17.

[41] *VP.* III, p. 62. The *Divyāvadāna* contains an account of a customs station (*śulka-śālā*) on the road connecting Rājagṛha and Campā (pp. 275-76). One advantage to maritime trade was that there were no tariffs (*aśulka*) and the most enterprising merchants were involved in that trade.

[42] *J.* I, p. 404; II, p. 181.

[43] *J.* II, p. 294; IV, p. 350.

[44] *J.* II, pp. 128-29. The sailors of the port city of Bharukaccha were organized and headed by a *niyyāmaka-jeṭṭha* (sailor-head), a position that was inherited. Merchants would come to Bharukaccha to hire the head navigator and his sailors for their maritime ventures. *J.* IV, pp. 137-39.

[45] There is an account of 500 merchants headed by their leader (*jeṭṭhakavāṇija* or *jeṭṭhavāṇija*) going out to sea. However, these leaders were more along the line of the *satthavāhas* we will encounter next than guild masters. *J.* II, pp. 128-29. See *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, Cambridge, 1922, pp. 210-11.

[46] *J.* II, pp. 127-29; III, pp. 188, 267; V, p. 75; VI, p. 34, etc.

[47] Shore-finding bird (*tīradassi-sakuṇa*), compass-crow (*disā-kāka*). *AN.* III, p. 368. *J.* III, pp. 126, 267.

[48] Concerning maritime trade at the time, see Moti Chandra, *Trade and Trade Routes in Ancient India*, New Delhi, 1977, pp. 60-65.

its of thanks after their safe return.[49]

The most influential members of the merchant class were the caravan owners, called "*satthavāha*" (Skt. *sārthavāha*), most of whom were vaiśyas, but also included brāhmaṇas.[50] Their social position was usually inherited by their sons,[51] and their work included actually leading their caravans and engaging in trade with remote areas.[52] Caravans were organized either with the capital of one *satthavāha* or by a number of merchants carrying their own wares under the leadership of a *satthavāha*.[53] The phrase "along with 500 wagons" is often used to describe the scale of these caravans.[54] Unfortunately, the Buddhist sources do not go into detail about exactly what these caravans were carrying, but we can assume that among their cargos were certainly expensive local products, such as sandal wood and high quality cotton, for which Kāsi (Bārāṇasī) was so well known.[55] Maritime trade was being conducted primarily in search of precious metals and gems.[56]

In addition to the goods they were trading, the caravans also required their wagons to carry large amounts of firewood, fodder and water.[57] They were always susceptible to five dangers while on the road: 1) highwaymen, 2) wild animals, 3) lack of water, 4) demons, and 5) lack of food.[58] When traveling through deserts and forestland, *satthavāhas* would often hire local guides to show them the way through such difficult regions.[59] When caravans stopped for the night, they would form their wagons into a circle, unhitch the oxen and camp along with the animals within the circle, and post armed guards to lookout for highwaymen and wild animals.[60] The

[49] *J*. I, p. 169; III, p. 294; IV, p. 350.
[50] *J*. V, p. 22.
[51] This assumption is based on the term, *satthavāhakula* (*satthavāha* family), and the son of a *satthavāha* himself leading a caravan. *J*. I, p. 98 ff., 107 ff., 194 ff.; II, p. 335 ff.; III, p. 200, etc. Also the account of one being born into a merchant family and becoming the head of *satthavāhas* suggests the possibility of the most able among merchants becoming a *satthavāha*. *J*. II, p. 295.
[52] Concerning the main trade routes of the time, see T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, London, 1903, pp. 103-05.
[53] The Pāli source are not clear about how caravans were financed; however, there is an account of a group of merchants from different countries being organized under the leadership of one man. *J*. IV, pp. 351-54.
[54] *J*. I, pp. 98, 107, 194, 368; II, p. 335; III, pp. 200, 403; IV, p. 350, etc.
[55] *MN*. II, p. 111. *AN*. I, pp. 247-48. *J*. I, p. 355.
[56] *J*. IV, pp. 21, 138-43. The *Vinaya Piṭaka* mentions pearls, *maṇis*, emeralds, conch shells, jewels, coral, silver, gold, rubies, and agates as the wealth of the sea. *VP*. II, p. 238. Also see *Divyāv*., pp. 229, 502.
[57] *DN*. II, p. 343.
[58] *J*. I, p. 99. The *Mahāniddesa* account excludes demons (II, p. 446).
[59] Land-guide (*thalaniyāmaka*), forest-watchman (*aṭaviārakkhika*). *J*. II, p. 335; *J*. V, pp. 22, 471.
[60] *J*. I, pp. 107-09.

most difficult places in the desert could not be traversed during the day due to the heat of the sand, so the caravans would stop and circle their wagons at daybreak, erect tents for shade and rest. After sunset, the guides hired in those places would lead the caravans by means of the stars.[61] It was necessary for caravan merchants to stay over in one place during the rainy season;[62] and according to the *Vinaya-Piṭaka*, a settlement where a caravan lodged for at least four months is defined as a *gāma* (village).[63] This and other stories suggest that women were also sometimes part of the caravans.[64]

Satthavāhas were required to possess knowledge about climate, water, botany and geography, leadership qualities, and wit and courage to protect their caravans from danger. We find stories of those with such attributes completing their projects successfully and those lacking them encountering failure.[65] The return on investment is described as two, three and four hundred percent.[66] A horse trader of the northern route (Uttarāpatha), who traveled with "500 head" appears often in the literature.[67]

There is the saying that "a caravan is a traveler's friend" (*sattho pathavato mittaṃ*),[68] which shows that they were often joined by strangers on their way in the same direction, like *bhikkhus* who were fed and protected by them during their travels.[69] The *Vinaya Piṭaka* especially admonishes *bhikkhunīs* to travel with caravans for their own safety.[70] In return, caravans were given the opportunity to hear sermons on Buddhism. There is also no doubt that caravans contributed greatly to the spread and propagation of Buddhism along the routes they traveled.

The *Divyāvadāna* contains many stories about merchants, especially the maritime variety. According to these accounts, the process by which merchants set out to sea can be summarized as follows:[71]

1) The main merchant (often *sārthavāha*) would arrive and ring a bell to call citizens to come trade with him.

[61] *J*. I, p. 103.
[62] *VP*. III, p. 6. The *Divyāvadāna* describes a certain horse trader who stopped over in one place and hired the local craftspeople (*śilpin*), paying them at the end of the rainy season before he departed (p. 509).
[63] *VP*. III, p. 46.
[64] *DN*. II, pp. 339-40. *J*. IV, p. 38.
[65] *DN*. II, pp. 342-46. *J*. I, pp. 98-103, 107-09, 270-71, 368; II, pp. 294-96; III, pp. 200-01.
[66] *J*. I, pp. 103, 109.
[67] *VP*. III, p. 6. *J*. I, p. 124; II, pp. 31, 287.
[68] *SN*. I, p. 37.
[69] *VP*. I, p. 152; IV, p. 131.
[70] *VP*. IV, p. 295.
[71] *Divyāv*., pp. 4-5, 34, 100-01, 228-30, 501-03, 524, 592-94, etc.

2) In response to the call, many merchants (often "500") would gather with their wares.
3) After invocations for the safety and success of the journey, the goods would be loaded on wagons or donkeys and taken to port.
4) The ship would then be prepared and a crew hired.
5) The cargo was then loaded aboard, and the ship set sail.

There were also occasions in which a group of merchants would approach a *sārthavāha* and request him to board their ship as their leader.[72] The profits from such a venture would be distributed among the participants upon return to port.[73] Sometimes *bhikkhus* would be on board as chaplains.[74] Here is no doubt another way in which Buddhism was propagated, in this case to Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia.

The accounts in the *Divyāvadāna* related to overland trade are not as detailed as the Pāli sources,[75] but one interesting account describes merchants giving food and clothing to the Buddha and his disciples, who were traveling with them between Śrāvastī and Rājagṛha.[76] While the Pāli sources do not mention commercial guild organizations among the merchants who gathered around the trading ships,[77] the *Divyāvadāna* mentions a group of merchants forming an organization (*gaṇa*) which forbade members from preempting the others in conducting their activities.[78]

There is the comparison of the Buddha walking among his followers with a *sārthavāha* walking among his group of merchants;[79] and many of these leaders are said to be engaged in maritime trade.[80] We also find the title, *mahāsārthavāha*, being bestowed by the king on the leader among the *sārthavāhas* themselves.[81] It may be possible to suppose that kings were involved in commercial activities, but there is no concrete evidence. Finally the *Divyāvadāna* identifies the "Uttarāpatha horse trader" of the Pāli sources as a bona-fide *sārthavāha*.[82]

72 *Divyāv*., p. 34.
73 *Divyāv*., pp. 42-43.
74 *Divyāv*., pp. 331-33.
75 *Divyāv*., pp. 87, 93-94, 271, 274, 276, 563-64, etc.
76 *Divyāv*., pp. 93-94.
77 *J*. I, p. 122.
78 *Divyāv*., p. 32.
79 *Divyāv*., pp. 148, 182, 267.
80 *Divyāv*., pp. 4-5, 34, 100-01, 376, 524, 589, 592-94, etc.
81 *Divyāv*., p. 100. The account has this figure, Supriya, being later made the king of Kāsi by citizens and ministers (p. 121).
82 *Divyāv*., p. 509. For more details about *sārthavāha*, see Moti Chandra, *op. cit.*

3. *Seṭṭhi*

Seṭṭhis (Skt. *śreṣṭhin*; lit. "the best") were the most influential members of the *gahapati* class[83] and were respected by people "from the royal family to urban and rural subjects."[84] According to the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, *seṭṭhi-gahapatis* "were very beneficial to both the king and his subjects."[85] Their leaders were sometimes called *mahāseṭṭhis*,[86] among whom was Anāthapiṇḍika-*gahapati* of Śrāvastī.[87] One rank down from the *seṭṭhis* were *anuseṭṭhis*, but all we know about this rank is that they accompanied their *seṭṭhis* to the royal palace.[88]

The Pāli sources tell us that *seṭṭhis* were very wealthy,[89] and the term *asītikoṭivibhava* (having 800 million in assets) was often used to describe them.[90] According to one account, the payment made to the famous physician Jīvaka for curing the wife of a *seṭṭhi* came to 16,000 in cash, male and female slaves and a horse-drawn cart.[91] No matter how exaggerated, this account accurately describes the general view of *seṭṭhis* at the time. *Seṭṭhi* families, of course, employed slaves, cooks, and personal servants in their households,[92] and the most trusted employees were directly involved in the family business as head clerks (*mahākammantika*), assistants (*upakāra*), and asset managers (*kuṭumbarakkhaka*).[93] *Seṭṭhis* who were involved in agricultural production employed also cultivators and herders.[94]

Seṭṭhis were, of course, involved in philanthropic activities, giving alms to religious institutions and the poor, and the first monastery given to the Buddhist *saṅgha* was donated by a *seṭṭhi* of Rājagṛha.[95] Anāthapiṇḍika, a *seṭṭhi* of Śrāvastī, is said to have spread gold over the ground when donating the Jetavana-vihāra,[96] and there were *seṭṭhis* who constructed almsgiving facilities (*dānasālā*) at the four gates and

83 "*Seṭṭhi-gahapati*". *VP*. I, pp. 16, 271, 273. *SN*. I, pp. 89, 91, etc. *Divyāv*., p, 474.
84 *J*. V, p. 382.
85 *VP*. I, p. 273.
86 *J*. V, pp. 383-84. There is the possibility that this accolade was an honorific term rather than an official title. See I. Fišer, "The Problem of the Seṭṭhi in Buddhist Jātakas," *Archiv Orientali*, XXII (1954), pp. 252-53. There is also the term *agga* (paramount)-*seṭṭhi*. *Apadāna*, I, p. 298. Also see *Divyāv*., p. 254 (*mahāśreṣṭhin*).
87 *J*. I, pp. 92-94.
88 *VP*. I, p. 18. *J*. V, p. 384.
89 "This [*seṭṭhi*] family is wealthy, possessing many assets, and lots of gold and silver, possessions, implements and grain..." *VP*. III, pp. 17-18.
90 *J*. I, pp. 345, 349, 466; II, p. 331; III, pp. 128, 300; IV, pp. 1, 225; V, pp. 210-11, etc.
91 *J*. I, p. 272.
92 *VP*. II, p. 154. *J*. I, pp. 346, 350, 377-78; II, p. 361; III, pp. 129, 257, etc.
93 *J*. I, pp. 227, 364, 441.
94 *J*. I, p. 388; III, p. 444.
95 *VP*. II, p. 146.
96 *J*. I, pp. 92-94.

central plazas of their cities, as well as in front of their residences.[97] Many of them lived in large cities, such as Śrāvastī and Rājagṛha, but there were others who lived in country towns and villages and frontier regions.[98]

As seen from the account of the daughter of a city dwelling *seṭṭhi* purifying her eyes with water after looking upon a caṇḍāla (untouchable),[99] *seṭṭhis* were no doubt proud of their pedigreed family heritages and would only mix and intermarry with families of similar pedigree and wealth.[100] The Buddist literature contains accounts of *seṭṭhi* daughters; marrying a king; eloping with a slave or a hunchback; being returned by her husband and given to a mendicant ascetic; and being given to a prisoner after he was bailed out of jail.[101] Nevertheless, such examples of marriage out of *seṭṭhi* circles should be considered exceptions. There are also accounts of long-distance marital relations among the *seṭṭhi* class: for example, Anāthapiṇḍika of Śrāvastī having a brother-in-law residing in Rājagṛha, a certain *seṭṭhi* of Ujjayinī sending a daughter to a family in Śāketa,[102] and an urban *seṭṭhi* receiving a daughter of a rural *seṭṭhi* for his son.[103] On the other hand, *seṭṭhis* residing in large cities had many relatives living near them and were involved in a wide networks of both kin and in-law relationships.[104] There were even a few young *seṭṭhis* that could be found among the kṣatriya and brāhmaṇa students who traveled to Taxila in search of knowledge.[105]

Seṭṭhis who resided in the cities made their fortunes mainly as merchants, and therefore were often *vāṇijas* and *satthavāhas*. One *satthavāha* born to a *seṭṭhi* family was said to have led caravans of "500 wagons,"[106] while another, who lived on the frontier sent his agent to a distant city with "500 wagons" filled with local products for sale to the *seṭṭhi* merchants there.[107] There is also an account of a son of a *seṭṭhi* taking his earnings and going into maritime trade.[108]

There were urban *seṭṭhis* who expanded their economic activities into the area of agriculture. For example, Anāthapiṇḍika of Śrāvastī owned a village that was probably bestowed upon him by the king (*bhogagāma*) with the rights to tax collection, and often visited it to inspect the cultivation work. He also owned a works-

[97] *J.* I, p. 231; III, p. 129; V, p. 383.
[98] *J.* II, pp. 225, 287: *VP.* III, pp. 11-12. *J.* I, p. 277: *J.* I, pp. 451-52.
[99] *J.* IV, p. 376.
[100] *J.* I, pp. 441, 452; II, p. 347; IV, p. 255. Also see *Divyāv.*, p. 254.
[101] *J.* V, pp. 210-11: *J.* I, p. 114; II, pp. 224-25: *Therīgāthā*, vv. 419-22: *Apadāna*, II, p. 562.
[102] *VP.* II, p. 154: *Therīgāthā*, vv. 405-06.
[103] *J.* IV, p. 37. Also see *J.* II, p. 225.
[104] *J.* VI, p. 135.
[105] *J.* IV, p. 38.
[106] *J.* I, pp. 270-71. There is one account of a "stranger-*seṭṭhi*" (*āgantukaseṭṭhi*) living in Śrāvastī, probably to do business. *J.* III, p. 299.
[107] *J.* I, pp. 377-78.
[108] *J.* IV, p. 2.

village (*kammantagāma*), where its residents were involved in cultivation or some other occupation. It is most probable that the *seṭṭhis* who resided in villages were mainly engaged in agricultural enterprises. One account describes a *seṭṭhi* inspecting his rice fields and complaining about the amount of the harvest to be remitted to the king, while another tells of a *seṭṭhi* living on the frontier petitioning the king for a tax exemption through the mediation of a prince.[109]

Seṭṭhis often buried their wealth for safe keeping,[110] and would sometimes lend capital to merchants, charging them interest. According to one account describing such a transaction, a wealthy *gahapati* (not called a *seṭṭhi* specifically) solicited an adroit merchant and lent him funds on the condition that the latter pay interest fees on time.[111] It is also written that Anāthapiṇḍika of Śrāvastī had many merchants sign loan contracts worth a total of 180 million cash.[112] On the other hand, there were cases of the financial collapse of *seṭṭhi* families, forcing their members to turn to hired labor or mendicancy for their livelihoods.[113]

The leading urban-based *seṭṭhis* often served their kings:[114] for example, Anāthapiṇḍika went to see the king wearing a ring with his seal attached and a gorgeous coat.[115] One account tells of a prince and a *seṭṭhi* heir who were friends from childhood and studied together under the same teacher. After the prince ascended the throne, his friend (now a *seṭṭhi*) would go to attend him three times a day.[116] When such a *seṭṭhi* retainer desired to renounce the world, he was first required to obtain permission from the king.[117] In one account we find that at ceremonies held at the royal palace, ministers, brāhmaṇas, "citizens beginning with *seṭṭhis*" and dancing girls would attend, each in their own separate groups.[118] This latter point indicates that *seṭṭhis* were the leading members of the common citizenry; and in the later commentaries, it is mentioned that *seṭṭhis* were allowed to raise umbrellas, which were symbols of authority and prestige.[119]

The social position of *seṭṭhi* was usually inherited,[120] sometimes even by son-

[109] For a discussion of the relationship between *seṭṭhis* and rural life, see pp. 148-52.
[110] *J.* I, pp. 227, 277; II, p. 431.
[111] *AN.* I, p. 117.
[112] *J.* I, p. 227.
[113] *J.* I, p. 111; II, p. 287; VI, P. 69.
[114] *J.* I, pp. 120, 345, 349; III, pp. 119, 299.
[115] *J.* I, p. 268.
[116] *J.* III, p. 475.
[117] *J.* II, pp. 64-65.
[118] *J.* VI, p. 43.
[119] Based on the *Vimānavatthu Aṭṭhakathā* as described in *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, p. 208.
[120] *J.* I, pp. 120, 231; II, pp. 64, 236, 431; III, p. 475.

in-laws.[121] One tale tells of a wealthy *gahapati* being given the position of *seṭṭhi* by the king and another of a king granting *seṭṭhi*-hood to a honest pauper.[122] We also find a king recruiting a talented man under the condition that he would be made a *seṭṭhi*.[123] However, it is not clear whether or not the position of *seṭṭhi* always required royal approval. Other accounts tell us about one king settling an argument between *seṭṭhis* and another king who seized the property of a *seṭṭhi* with no heir.[124]

As to how many *seṭṭhis* usually resided in any one city, we find an account of three or four sons of *seṭṭhis* (*seṭṭhiputta*) of Bārāṇasī[125] and "500" sons of *seṭṭhis* in the city of Śrāvastī.[126] There is also an account of four urban-based *seṭṭhis* being arrested.[127] It is said that Anāthapiṇḍika of Śrāvastī donated Jetavana to the Buddha with the participation of "500" other *seṭṭhis*.[128] The figure "500" of course should not be taken literally, but in the sense of "many."

Śreṣṭhins often appear in stories contained in the *Divyāvadāna*, being identified, like in the Pāli sources, as *gṛhapatis*, many of whom became wealthy by means of commerce.[129] There are two particular items that are of interest here.

The first tells that after the death of a certain *śreṣṭhin* of Rājagṛha, the citizens gathered together to decide who would succeed his *śreṣṭhin* status and chose the son of a *gṛhapati*, who by the way was a poor and working as a hired hand.[130] The second story concerns the residents of a certain town (*karvaṭaka*) gathering together for the purpose of bestowing the position of *śreṣṭhin* on one of them.[131] Both accounts suggest that *śreṣṭhins* were selected by the local citizenry as their civic leaders. The *Divyāvadāna* also likens the Buddha walking among his disciples to a *śreṣṭhin* surrounded by local citizens.[132] These accounts clearly suggest a leadership

[121] *J*. I, p. 122.
[122] *J*. V, p. 382: *J*. I, pp. 422-24.
[123] *J*. III, p. 448.
[124] *J*. I, pp. 468-69: *SN*. I, pp. 89, 91. *J*. III, p. 299.
[125] *J*. II, p. 322; III, p. 49.
[126] *J*. I, p. 501. In the city of Śrāvastī there was a *seṭṭhiputta* with a number of married *seṭṭhiputta* friends (*J*. I, p. 433), among whom there might have been those who were not first sons and thus were probably not eligible for *seṭṭhi*-hood. See I. Fišer, *op.cit.*, pp. 254-58.
[127] *J*. VI, p. 135.
[128] *J*. I, p. 93.
[129] *Divyāv*., pp. 254, 309, 474. There is also the term "*vaṇikśreṣṭhin*" (p. 242). According to the *Avadānaśataka*, there was a *śreṣṭhin* who owned "500" sugar crushing factories (*ikṣuśālā*), indicating participation in industry. P. L. Vaidya ed., *Avadānaśataka*, Darbhanga, 1958, p. 108.
[130] *Divyāv*., p. 309.
[131] *Divyāv*., pp. 577-78.
[132] *Divyāv*., pp. 148, 182, 267.

role being played by *śreṣṭhins*, but given the scarcity of the available sources, it would probably be too hasty to conclude that such a role indicates the development of autonomy in cities or the strengthening of civil rights among the people at the time in question.

Seṭṭhi (*śreṣṭhin*) has been translated in the research literature as either "rich merchant," from the fact of their commercial activities and resulting prosperity, or "fiscal agents," emphasizing their relationship to kings. They are also described as "guild masters" and "leaders of the merchant class." However, as we have seen from the above evidence, the role of *seṭṭhi* clearly transcended mere commercial success, while on the other hand, there is no proof that they were appointed in charge of fiscal affairs or made the heads of guilds. From the empirical evidence presented here, we can induce the following about the nature of *seṭṭhis* at that time.

The term "*seṭṭhi*" was generally used to refer to those residents of the capital and other cities and towns who were recognized as the most influential, and their position was usually passed down from generation to generation. They (to be exact, the leaders among them) occasionally represented the common people in directly serving the king. Although we do not know to what extent *seṭṭhis* participated in the political process, they probably participated in advisory roles in fiscal operations and urban affairs. Those *seṭṭhis* who acted in such a semi-bureaucratic capacity needed to be either appointed or at least approved by the king. In the Buddhist sources, we see the title of *seṭṭhi* being bestowed arbitrarily by kings on even the meanest of urban residents, but usually the most influential members of urban society seem to have been appointed *seṭṭhis* in recognition of their leadership roles among the citizenry. We can thus assume that the title of such semi-bureaucratic *seṭṭhis* was also inherited. The same can also be said of *seṭṭhis* active on the local level. While the sources are not clear on this point, it seems that those local influential and wealthy figures referred to as *seṭṭhis* were also involved as advisors in provincial governance.

It would only follow that during the era of the rise and golden age of cities in ancient India, those who rose to power and influence among citizens would have been wealthy merchants. This is why the title of *seṭṭhi* tended to become synonymous with the most prosperous members of the merchant class, resulting in *seṭṭhis* forming the leadership of that class.[133]

[133] The researches on *seṭṭhis* include A. N. Bose, *Social and Rural Economy of Northern India*, Vol. II, 2nd ed., Calcutta, 1967, pp. 9-14. R. Fick, *op.cit.*, pp. 257-66.

Concluding Remarks

The growth and prosperity of cities and the development of large scale, long distance trade were fostered by the leading members of the vaiśya-dominated *gahapati* class. And the urban and urban-rural social and economic patterns, originated in the middle and lower reaches of the Ganga during the formative period of Buddhism, spread throughout the subcontinent under state-led economic development during the reign of the Mauriyan dynasty. Despite political disintegration following the fall of that dynasty, the flourishing of both cities and trade continued in a more regional fashion up to the Gupta era. The two sources examined in this chapter constitute an important and valuable record of economic and social conditions; but they have their definite limits, which can only be expanded by studying additional documentation, epigraphy and numismatic sources, and conducting archeological excavation.

Appendix: Urban Life as Seen in the Pāli Buddhist Sources*

Buddhism developed under the support of the kṣatriya and vaiśya classes that resided in cities. For this reason, the Buddhist sources contain many detailed references depicting urban life.

To begin with, settlements where people gathered in their everyday lives are divided into *gāma* (villages), *nigama* (towns) and *nagara/pura* (cities) in the order of scale, to which available sources add the regional categories of *janapada* (country) and *raṭṭha* (territory). There is also a categorization that inserts the capital city (*rājadhānī*). *Nigama* is not described very well, but in general it seems to have been the center of economic activity in a certain *janapada* and functioned like an entrepot (or market town) linking villages to large cities. Wealthy brāhmaṇas and merchants resided there, and there is one account of a *seṭṭhi* resident of a *nigama* marrying into the family of a wealthy *seṭṭhi* residing in a city.

There were six major cities (*mahā-nagara*): Campā, Rājagaha/Rājagṛha, Sāvatthī/Śrāvastī, Sāketa/Śāketa, Kosambī/Kauśāmbī and Bārāṇasī/Vārāṇasī/Benares. Cities in the Buddhist sources were laid out usually in either square or rectangular plans and were enclosed by city walls and moats. There were city gates in each direction, and either turrets or observation towers were constructed over the walls and gates. Guards were constantly stationed at all the gates to inspect anyone trying to enter the city and turn away any suspicious characters. When they closed the gates in the evening, they would announce the fact in loud voices, three times

*This appendix is the summary of my article "City and City Life in the Pāli Buddhist Sources".

according to one story. Once the gates were closed, no one, not even an aristocrat or even royalty, would be allowed to enter the city.

There was a plaza at the center of the city where the roads connecting the four gates crossed. The palace or the meeting hall would be built nearby the center. Lining the streets in the central district were tall buildings with windows and balconies. Markets with vegetable, meat, flower, and firewood stands and the like were located near each of the four gates and in the central plaza. Residential areas were often divided according to similar occupation and social class, like ivory cutter, launderer and cook districts. The poor would gather in small corners near the gates. Gardens, lotus ponds, etc. would be constructed in and around the city for the purpose of recreation for everyone from the royal family on down. There were villages on the outskirts of the city called *dvāragāma* (village beyond the gates), where cultivators and craftspeople resided and maintained various connections to life inside the gates.

Cities were bustling and noisy. According to one Buddhist source, the streets were filled with ten different voices day and night: that is, those of elephants, horses, chariots, drums, singing, and "eat, drink and be merry!", etc. The cities of the middle and lower Ganga basin were known as places where many intellectuals (including the Buddha and the Jina) were active in an atmosphere of new ideas, freedom of speech, and diversified debate. According to one Buddhist source, topics of discussion included kingship, brigandage, the military, war, cuisine, clothing, gender, and problems related to both town and country.

There are many items describing amusement in the city, with festivals (*ussava, chaṇa, samajja*) being the greatest sources of entertainment. On the day of a festival, the city streets would be richly decorated and a drum beaten to announce the commencement of activities, telling the citizenry in and out of the city to stop their daily work, put on their best clothes, and come out into the streets. The king would also appear riding a decorated elephant and parade through the city. There would be dancing, singing, lectures and speeches, and hand bell and bass drum performances. Some festivities would continue for as long as seven days. There was also a liquor festival (*surāchaṇa*), during which the participants would sing and dance while enjoying their favorite alcoholic beverages and dishes of meat. It is said that after the men finished their banquets, the women would gather to drink and carouse.

Even for the poorest residents of the city, like slaves and hired water carriers, festivals provided opportunities to dress up and have fun, and they provided also a chance for urban and rural people to commune. There is also an account of professionals coming from the outskirts into the city to give dance or acrobatic performances and drum or conch concerts for getting money. At the end of the festival they would buy necessary goods with the take and return to their villages.

Of course, the courtesan (*vesī, vaṇṇadāsī, gaṇikā*) was an indispensable part

of the urban entertainment scene. Even the Buddhist sources admit that courtesans contributed much to the prosperity of cities. The *gaṇikās* formed the highest class of prostitute, being the most carefully chosen. There is an account of one by the name of Ambapālī, a resident of Vesāli, donating to the Buddhist *saṅgha* a mango grove she owned in the suburbs and winning a dispute with Licchavi aristocrats over priority to entertain the Buddha.

The Buddha's lifetime was marked by a developing money economy and rising urban economic activity led by the *gahapati* class. All kinds of occupations abounded, some of whose members formed groups called *seṇi* and *pūga*. The meaning of the former is "occupational organization," but the relationship between the two is not clear. Many scholars have referred to them as "guilds." There is an item that tells of eighteen *seṇis* joining a parade led by a king. Both *seṇi* and *pūga* were governed by bylaws; and whenever internal disputes arose, an assembly would be held to hear testimony from witnesses and punish wrongdoers, the most severe punishment being expulsion from the organization. As a rule, the king (or the state) would not interfere in the affairs of these guilds, being content to deal with them on a group basis. But when necessary, the whole guild (or its head) would be summoned, and it goes without saying that the state would get involved in disputes between guilds.

In addition to the political relationship between cities and villages through administrative agencies, there were also economic relationships involving production and distribution. Marital relations also existed between urban and rural families of similar standing, and festivals were always venues for contact between town and country. Although there is a view that the city was merely an extension of the village in ancient India, in fact, we find great differences between the two areas in terms of politics, economics, society and culture. In the Pāli literature, cities (*nagara, pura*) are clearly distinguished from villages (*gāma*) and the countries (*janapada*), and city dwellers tend to look upon country life as backwards and vulgar. Megasthenes, the Greek who visited India at the end of the fourth century BC, states that the cultivators there were engaged exclusively in agriculture and did not commute to the cities. This is no doubt a gross generalization, but there must have been many peasants who did not live within reach of urban areas and carried on their daily lives free of contact with them.

Chapter VIII
RURAL LIFE AS SEEN IN BUDDHIST SOURCES

In this chapter we will look at the ancient Indian village as depicted in the Pāli Buddhist sources, mainly the *Jātakas*. Although the stories themselves are works of fiction, the social aspects that they contain accurately depict what was going on in the regions of the middle and lower Ganga basin between the fifth and second centuries BC.

A. General Landscape and Livelihood

(1) [The villagers] awoke early and gathered in the center of the village to do their village-work (*gāmakicca*). At the same time, the king entered the village through the entrance on an armored horse dressed in full regalia. (*J.* III, pp. 8-9)

(2) There were exactly 30 households (*kula*) in the village. One day the men from these households stood in the center of the village doing their village-work (*gāmakamma*)... While performing good deeds along with him (the bodhisatta, i.e. Gotama Buddha in his previous life), they would rise early, pick up their knives, hand axes and bars, go to the crossroads, use the bars to dig up the rocks, cut down trees that posed barriers to wagon axles, fill the holes and ruts, build dikes, dig reservoirs, build a meeting hall, give alms and follow the precepts... From that time on, they performed good deeds as hoped, and then decided to build a big meeting hall (*sālā*) at the crossroads. So they sent for carpenters and had it built. (*J.* I, pp. 199-200)

(3) The bodhisatta was born to a wealthy family (*kuṭumbiyakula*) in one village, and when he was a child he played with the other children under the *nigrodha* tree at the entrance to the village. (*J.* III, p. 202)

(4) The village head (*grāmika)* hurriedly left the village and headed for the forest to check on how the work was going... [Upon his return, the village head came upon a self-emancipated buddha (*pratyekabuddha*).] He took the buddha and led him into the village. He went to the crossroads (center of the village) and called out "Avidha, avidha!" When the village men, and women, heard his call, they all came and gathered.[1]

(5) The Buddha gazed upon the rice paddies of Magadha lined up in square fash-

[1] This is an item taken from a Sanskrit work, the *Mahāvastu*, to emphasize the importance of the village's central plaza. É. Senart ed., *Le Mahāvastu*, Tome I, Paris, 1882, p. 301.

ion, formed in lines, separated by dikes and [their irrigation canals and banks] crossed in a checkered design. (*VP*. I, p. 287)[2] "Look, *bhikkhus*, at the paddies. They are not lumpy, there are no stones or pebbles in them. They are not saline, their soil is deep, they have two waterways for supply and drainage, they are well irrigated, and their ridges are well built. When paddy meeting all these eight criteria are sown, the harvest is rich, the rice is delicious, and there is even more growth." (*AN*. IV, pp. 237-38)

(6) In one village in the kingdom of Kāsi, there was a brāhmaṇa peasant (*kassakabrāhmaṇa*) who after pasturing his cows went to plow his paddy and began the shoveling work. The cows were eating the leaves off some bushes, but eventually wandered into the forest and ran off. (*J*. V, p. 68)

(7) The bodhisatta was a wealthy man (*seṭṭhi*). When the grain was ripe, one of his cow herders drove his herd into the forest, built a shed for it and stayed there to tend it. (*J*. I, p. 338)

Rural villages were concentrated settlements accessible from two or four directions with the main activity taking place in a central plaza, which often also formed crossroads for main transportation routes. There were also meeting halls for the villagers in the vicinity of the central plaza. The entrances to the villages were forested by large trees, from which fields extended outward, divided by fences,[3] paddy ridges and/or irrigation canals. Beyond the fields was shrubbery and beyond that forest land, probably held collectively and used for animal grazing and firewood collecting.

B. Influential Person on Village Administration

(8) As the most prestigious monarch, King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha ruled over 80,000 villages, the heads (*gāmika*) of which he called together... (*VP*. I, p. 179)

(9) The *gāmabhojaka* had always made his judgements on cases fairly, which is why he was widely admired; people were content with him and joyfully gave him gifts. This is why he was handsome, wealthy and prestigious. However, recently he has started taking bribes and now fails to render fair decisions. (*J*. II, p. 309) "I am not crazy. You have slandered me for no reason at all. So I am going to the *gāmabhojaka* and have him fine you eight *kahāpaṇas*." So the two disputants went to the *gāmabhojaka* to settle their differences, and the

[2] See I. B. Horner tr., *The Book of the Discipline* (*Sacred Books of the Buddhists*, XIV), Vol. IV, London, reprinted in 1962, p. 408, notes 1-4.

[3] Concerning fences, see items (21) and (46).

woman was ordered to pay a fine. Then the villagers bound her and began striking her, shouting, "Pay the fine!" (*J*. I, p. 483)

(10) Their (the villagers') *gāmabhojaka* thought for a moment, then said, "Formerly, I earned my wealth through liquor charges, taxes (*bali*) and fines, because at the time the villagers got drunk and murdered someone." (*J*. I, p. 199)

(11) Another *gāmabhojaka*, who resided in Kāsi, prohibited the sale of liquor and was visited by a large crowd of people, asking, "What are we to do about our traditional drinking festival that is held at this time, your honor?" He replied, "You may hold it as before." (*J*. IV, pp. 115-16)

(12) At that time seed for growing grain was washed away during the rainy season, causing a famine. When the grain began to ripen, all the villagers gathered together and said, "We will pay you husked rice in two months, when we harvest our crops." So they received an old cow from the *gāmabhojaka* for meat. (*J*. II, p. 135)

(13) One minister of the king of Kosala won the favor of the king, [received a village on the frontier, and as its *gāmabhojaka*][4] collected the royal tax (*rājabali*) levied on that frontier village; then fell in with a band of thieves... Early one morning [the minister] gathered the villagers together and led them into the forest... The king summoned [the minister] and after inquiring about his wrongdoing, punished him severely and sent another *gāmabhojaka* to the village. (*J*. I, p. 354)

(14) It was when he was at Jetavana-vihāra that the Master (the Buddha) spoke about a *purohita* of the king of Kosala. Now, when he (the *purohita*) boarded a wagon and was on his way to the village which he was enjoying (*bhogagāma*)... (*J*. III, p. 104) One day when the king's *purohita* was on his way home from his *bhogagāma*... (*J*. IV, p. 473)

(15) One day, when he (Anāthapiṇḍika-*seṭṭhi*) was about to set out for his *bhogagāma*, he asked a friend to look after things until he returned. (*J*. I, p, 364)

(16) At that time there was a village being managed (*kammantagāma*) by Anāthapiṇḍika-*gahapati*. He told an attendant, "If by chance some of the virtuous come [to the village], prepare food [for them]."... [After inviting the *bhikkhus* into his house, the attendant] took off his ring, served them something to eat and told them, "Oh respected ones, after you eat, please feel free to be on your way. I have some business to attend to." He then rose and left, forgetting to take his ring. (*VP*. IV, p. 162)

[4] This item is quoted from the introduction to the *Kharassara Jātaka*. The description of a minister receiving a village and becoming its *gāmabhojaka* is found in the main text relating to the same incident.

From item (8), we find that the basic units of the ancient state were villages, which were ruled by the king through *gāmikas* (Skt. *grāmika*), or village heads charged with administrative duties. They may have been elected by the villagers, or inherited their positions from their fathers, but the Pāli sources do not go into anymore detail about them. The problem arises, however, to the connection, if any, between *gāmikas* and the *gāmabhojakas* mentioned in items (9) through (13). The latter term has been translated into English as "village head" and "landholder," but from the items presented here, they certainly were local figures with both authority and wealth far above the common villagers and usual village heads. They received gifts from the other villagers, determined village law, rendered decisions concerning disputes, levied fines and taxes, and at times organized the villagers into work parties. We also know from items (10) and (12) that *gāmabhojakas* controlled the sale of liquor and granted loans to villagers under pledges of grain.

These items seem to suggest that *gāmabhojakas* were officials appointed to administer villages, rather than usual village heads identical to the *gāmika* mentioned in item (8).[5] From item (13), the position of *gāmabhojaka*, which means "he who enjoys the fruits of a village," was bestowed on high ranking officials who had won the king's favor, and from item (10), one of them "became wealthy from levying fines and taxes." They seem to have been outsiders who had been granted the right to administer villages and collect all or part of the taxes[6] (including fines villagers owed to the king) levied there. All of the items relate that a clear distinction was made between them and the rest of the villagers.[7]

Items (14) and (15) tell us that there were also *purohitas* and *seṭṭhis*, who resided in the city, owned their own *bhogagāmas* and often went to visit them.[8] From items (9)-(12), we find that there were those among the *gāmabhojakas* who went to live in the villages they were granted and assumed power there. The rights held by *gāmabhojakas* were ones originally enjoyed by the king, not rights related to the use or ownership of arable land. That is to say, the rights to land theoretically remained the same as when the village had been under the direct rule of the king; however, in reality *gāmabhojakas* tended to violate the traditional rights and customs of villagers.

[5] R. Fick, *The Social Organisation in North-East India in Buddha's Time*, pp. 120-21, 160-61.

[6] It is not clear whether the *rājabali* tax collected by the *gāmabhojaka* in item (13) was granted to him by the king or was to be remitted by him to the king. If the latter was the case, then this particular *gāmabhojaka* was enjoying at least a part of the village's fruits.

[7] For more details on *gāmabhojaka*, see A. N. Bose, *Social and Rural Economy of Northern India*, Vol. I, pp. 66-76.

[8] The term "*bhoga*" is a derivative of *bhuj* (to enjoy the fruits of), thus *bhogagāma* means a village over which certain rights are being enjoyed. It is likely that the owners of *bhogagāmas* could have been called *gāmabhojakas*. Also see T. W. Rhys Davids and W. Stede, *Pāli-English Dictionary*, s.v. *Bhoga*.

The final problem here is the *kammantagāma* in item (16). One English translation describes the village as one "in which there was business." *Kammanta* does mean "doing, working, business, and occupation," thus the translation "being managed by" here. Now if the interpretation is correct, this particular village was different from the *gāmabhojaka's* village discussed above. It seems that Anāthapiṇḍika held ownership rights over the land he managed and that those who did the actual work were merely his serfs or hirelings. Therefore, *kammantagāma* probably indicates the settlement where the direct producers resided. The fact that wealthy urban residents were involved in agricultural ventures is attested to by the following items.

C. Land Management by *Seṭṭhis*

(17) One day he (a *seṭṭhi*) went to his paddy and looked around at the kernels that were near bursting, ready for harvest. On his return, he decided to have a sheaf of rice stalks tied, had [his servant] take a handful of stalks and tie them to a stake. However, this reminded him that he was obliged to render the king's portion from the field and that he had taken a portion for himself before rendering the king's portion... (*J.* II, p. 378)

(18) His (the son of a wealthy *seṭṭhi*) parents grew poorer over time. Those [hirelings] who worked in their fields and at their enterprise... took what they had and ran off. The slaves and hirelings who served the household took gold, cash and the like and also ran off. (*J.* VI, p. 69)

(19) Later, the king's officials went to the village in order to measure the size of its fields. A *seṭṭhi* [living in the village] went to the prince (elder brother of the reigning king) and said, "Your highness, we are the ones who are feeding you. Would you please write a letter to your brother, the king, and have him exempt us from taxation (*bali*)." The prince agreed and sent his brother a letter [to that effect]... The king agreed and had the village exempt. (*J.* IV, p. 169)

As seen in the preceding chapter, *seṭṭhis* were in general wealthy urban merchants, the leaders of commercial society and often came and went at the royal palace, functioning as fiscal agents.[9] There were also *seṭṭhis* who possessed *bhogagāmas* as in item (15). Anāthapiṇḍika in (15) and (16) and the *seṭṭhi* in (18) were rich urban merchants, but those in (17) and (19) were wealthy rural gentry, who held local power and were agricultural managers employing hired laborers and slaves. However, it seems from (17) and (19) that these *seṭṭhis* were not *bhogagāma* hold-

[9] R. Fick, *op. cit.*, pp. 257-66.

ers, since they were obliged to render usual taxes to the king.

D. Cultivation and Village Life

(20) "*Bhikkhus*, there are three things that every head of a cultivating family must do before everything. They are first plowing and leveling the soil, and when that is done, sowing the seed at the right time, and when that is done, irrigating the field or draining it at the proper time." (*AN.* I, p. 229) " First have them plow the field; then after plowing, have them sow; then after sowing, have them irrigate; then after irrigating, have them drain the fields; then after draining, have them weed; then after weeding, have them harvest; then after harvest have them transport the crops; then after transporting, have them pile the sheaths; then after piling, have them thresh; then after threshing, have them separate out the straw; then after separating the straw, have them mill the rice to remove the husks; then after removing the husks, have them separate out the husks; then after separating the husks, have them store the rice; then after storing the rice, have them repeat the same tasks the following year and the year after." (*VP.* II, pp. 180-81)

(21) The people [of the village] said, "Because our fields are dry, we will [help the *bhikkhus*] after we irrigate them." After they irrigated, they said, "After we sow." After sowing, they said, "After we build fences." After they built the fences, they said, "After we weed," then "After we harvest," then "After we mill." It took them over three months to complete all of these tasks. (*J.* I, p. 215)

(22) "Oh lord of all living beings, Sakka (Indra), if you would be so generous to grant me fields, wealth, gold, cows and horses, and slaves and servants..." (*J.* IV, p. 240)

(23) He refused the brāhmaṇa's offer of a thousand *karīsas* [of arable] and took only eight. The brāhmaṇa dug [holes] and erected fence posts [on the property line], then handed the land over to him... (*J.* IV, p. 281)

(24) He was living in Benares, ...and in one sowing season, on his way to the field he spotted a *paccekabuddha*, and so he [ordered] his slaves and hirelings to go and sow seeds, while he led the buddha to his house and entertained him... (*J.* IV, p. 318)

(25) The bodhisatta had been born to the brāhmaṇa family in a village outside of the gates of Benares. He became a householder and made his living by the plow. He had two children, a boy and a girl. When his son came of age, he brought home a young woman from a family of similar standing, bringing the members of his family to six, including a female slave... (*J.* III, p. 162)

(26) His (the brāhmaṇa's) father was earning a living cultivating his fields with two cows, but one of the cows died. (*J.* II, p. 165)

(27) He (a royal attendant) went to a village three *yojanas* from the town and settled there. However, he was not able to cultivate because he had no cows. When the rains came, he asked a friend to lend him two head. He ploughed all day, then fed the cows grass and took them back to their owner. (*J.* II, p. 300)

(28) He was reborn into a poor family. And after his mother died, he would wake up early in the morning, clean his teeth with a toothpick and rince his mouth, then go out to work for wages or cultivate, the earnings from which enabled him to cook rice or gruel and care for his father. (*J.* IV, p. 43)

(29) [While he was wandering, Mittavindaka, who was not a brāhmaṇa, but had been educated like one,] came to a village on the frontier and worked for wages to earn a living. There he married the daughter of a poor family and bore two children by her. The villagers asked him, "Teach us the difference between right and wrong," and they paid Mittavindaka a salary and gave him a cabin to live in at the entrance to the village. (*J.* I, p. 239)

Items (20) and (21) summarize for us the yearly cultivation cycle. Item (2) makes clear that work was also done collectively in each village. Such collective efforts no doubt enabled villagers to construct irrigation and flood control facilities related in item (5). Items (12) and (29) show how villagers would negotiate collectively with *gāmabhojakas* and new arrivals. While item (22) relates the case of private ownership of arable,[10] item (23) shows how land was apportioned using fences after the transfer of ownership (see also item (31) regarding boundaries). Items (21) and (46) suggest that fences were built by their owners, not only to protect their crops from wild and domestic animals, but also to demarcate their holdings. We also find that villagers could have been socially stratified by wealthy cultivators who employed hired laborers and slaves to do the work (7) (24), peasants who cultivated their own land with family labor (including household servants) (25) (26), poor peasants who had to borrow plow animals and work for wages part time (27) (28) and landless outsiders who wandered into the village (29). A strong sense of communal consciousness must have existed among the villagers, and the free sale or transfer of land was probably restricted, although we find no evidence in the literature suggesting that landholding was communal in anyway or that cultivation itself was a communal activity; the landholdings varied in size.[11] As implied by items (4) and (8), the *gāmikas* were probably the most influential figures in village life. Item

[10] It is related that Anāthapiṇḍika purchased the land for the Jetavana-vihāra from a prince and then donated it to the Buddha. This episode is cited as indicating a concrete case of land sale. See A. N. Bose, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-42.

[11] A. N. Bose, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-54. R. S. Sharma, *Light on Early Indian Society and Economy*, Bombay, 1966, pp. 61-62.

(29) is very interesting in showing us the process by which a brāhmaṇa came and settled in a village; first concluding some kind of contract with the villagers, then no doubt gradually becoming a full-fledged member of the community. There were also brāhmaṇas who acquired land and cultivated it (25) (26).

E. kingship and Rural Life: Taxation

(30) One day [the royal appraiser (*doṇamāpaka-mahāmatta*)][12] sat at the entrance to the storehouse and measured out the king's portion [of the harvest]. He took grains of rice from the pile that had yet to be counted and used them as unit marks [to measure it]. Just then it started to rain. The appraiser counted the unit marks, said, "This much of the rice has been counted," then gathered together the rice units, threw them on top of the pile that had been measured, and started to run for shelter. He stopped at the entrance, though, and asked himself, "Did I throw those units on the measured pile or on the unmeasured one? If I threw them onto the measured pile, I have for no good reason increased the king's portion and reduced that of the *gahapatika*. (*J.* II, pp. 378-79)

(31) One day while measuring fields in one locality, [the royal surveyor (*rajju-gāhaka-amacca*)] tied a rope to stakes, gave one end to the owner of the land (*khettasāmikia*), and took the other end himself. Stretching it out full length, he came to a hole in which a crab dwelt. He thought, "If I drive the stake into this hole, I'll probably kill the crab; but if I drive it on that side, the king will suffer a loss, and if I drive it on this side, the landowner will suffer. What should I do?" (*J.* II, p. 376)

(32) Because the man would not come, the king decided to raise the taxes (*bali*) levied on his village, but he still would not come. The king then raised the taxes a second time and then a third, but he still would not come. (J. III, p. 9)

(33) Long ago in the city of Uttarapañcāla in the kingdom of Kampilla, a king by the name of Pañcāla went astray and ruled his realm outside the law without considering the consequences. His ministers also became unjust. Suffering from over-taxation, his subjects wandered like deer in the forest with their wives and children. Where the villages used to stand, communities ceased to exist. Out of fear of the king's officials, the people were not able to dwell in their homes during the day. They encircled their dwellings with thorn bushes and fled into the forest at the break of dawn. They were plundered by the king's officials during the day and robbers at night. (*J.* V, pp. 98-99)

[12] The term *doṇamāpaka* means literally "one who measures in *doṇa*" (unit of volume).

(34) At that time, the king of Benares became excited about deer hunting and would not eat if there were no meat at his table. He stopped the work being done by his subjects and summoned them all everyday to participate in the hunt. (*J.* I, p. 149)

In ancient India, institutions making kings the economic owners of the entire territory within their realms were not well developed, even though their rights over forest and unreclaimed land were generally recognized. Arable and newly reclaimed land was "owned" by those who cultivated or managed it. According to the works of Hindu law, kings were entitled to tax as compensation for protecting the lives and property of their subjects and upholding the social order. Items (19) and (32) show that raising or exempting taxes was the sole prerogative of the king. With the exception of villages granted or donated by the kings to certain individuals or communities, the large and small landowners of each village[13] remitted their taxes to the king through his officials. There were two main taxes levied on the subjects of the Mauryan Dynasty: *bhāga* (the king's portion of the grain harvest) and *bali* (religious and miscellaneous taxes).[14] Items (10), (13), (19), (32), and (33) find the king and *gāmabhojakas* collecting *bali*, while the *bali* mentioned in items (19), (32) and (33) is not used in contrast to *bhāga*, but rather in a more general sense including *bhāga*. Items (17) and (30) show that the king's portion of the grain harvest, *rājabhāga*, was collected at a fixed rate; and while the *Jātakas* do not enumerate that rate, other sources tell us that it was traditionally one-sixth.[15] Item (19) mentions royal officials traveling around the kingdom surveying arable land, while item (31) goes into more detail about exactly how it was conducted by *rajjugāhakas* (lit. rope carriers), who would come and measure accurately each landowner's holdings with rope and stakes. However, there is little proof that such accurate and systmatic surveying was done specifically for taxation purposes. Item (33) touches upon a case of over-taxation, but levies other than *bali*/*bhāga* are not mentioned. However, item (34) tells us that corvee labor was also exacted on the peasantry.

[13] In the Pāli sources we find those owning arable being called "*khettasāmika*" (landowner), "*kassaka*" (cultivator), "*gahapati*" (household head; wealthy men living in the countryside or cities), "*kuṭumbika*" (a person with property), and "*seṭṭhi*" (wealthy man). There were brāhmaṇas who owned land in normal agrarian villages, but it is unclear whether or not they paid taxes.

[14] Rummindei Pillar Inscription of Aśoka.

[15] Refer to pp. 102, 110 of this volume.

F. Occupations

(35) At that time there were two merchants, one residing in a town, the other in a village, who were friends. The villager deposited five hundred plough shares with his friend in the town. (*J.* II, p. 181) A long time ago when King Brahmadatta ruled the kingdom at Benares, the bodhisatta was born to a village potter's family, and it was by pottery making that he supported his wife and children. (*J.* II, p. 79)
(36) The bodhisatta was born to a wealthy family (*kuṭimbika*) [in a town]... He had a younger brother. Later when their father died, they decided to take over his business. On the way back from a village where they had obtained a thousand *kahāpaṇas*... (*J.* II, p. 423)
(37) There was a wealthy man in Benares who lent a thousand *kahāpaṇas* to a man living in the countryside, but who died before the loan was repaid... [The thieves who apprehended the wealthy man's son] asked him where he was living. He said Benares. They asked him where he had come from. He told them that he had gone to a village where a man who owed him a thousand *kahāpaṇas* was living. (*J.* II, pp. 388-89)
(38) His father has earned a living as a merchant, and when the bodhisatta turned sixteen, his father put the vessels on his son's back for sale and they traveled through villages and towns on their way to Benares. (*J.* II, p. 15)
(39) At that time there was a merchant who loaded his cargo on a donkey and peddled his wares on foot... One day while the merchant was having his breakfast prepared at an inn located at the entrance to the village... (*J.* II, pp. 109-10)
(40) At that time there was an elderly physician who could not find work of any kind in the village. So he left, and happened to spot a snake sleeping with its head sticking out from a crook in a tree. He thought to himself, "There is nothing for me in the village. Maybe I can get something by deceiving the children into being bitten by the snake, then treating their wounds..." (*J.* III, p. 202)

There is not much mention in the Buddhist literature about rural craftspeople like carpenters and potters (2) (35), so it would be safe to assume that there were not many village-based tradespeople at that time. From items (35), (38), and (39), it seems that the necessities of everyday life, like agricultural implements and water vessels, were brought in and sold by merchants, or like in item (54) below, villagers would go to town or crafts villages to buy them. Item (40) informs us of physicians traveling from village to village to treat patients. There were also villagers who borrowed money from urban-based merchants and moneylenders (36) (37). We can probably assume that villagers who could not repay their debts would have to give up their land in lieu and that this was probably one source of the arable that was owned and managed by wealthy city dwellers. One *Jātaka* also tells us that villagers hired herders (*gopālaka*) collectively to tend the cattle owned by each of them.[16]

G. Donation of Villages

(41) [A brāhmaṇa made an earnest appeal to the king.] "Give to me five of the best villages, along with one hundred female slaves, seven hundred head of cattle, over a thousand gold and two wives equal to me [in family status]..." The king granted them... (*J.* IV, pp. 97, 99)
(42) The king was pleased by the bodhisatta's words and gave to the brāhmaṇa (the bodhisatta's father) sixteen head of cattle and ornaments for them, as well as the village where he (the brāhmaṇa) lived as a *brahmadeyya*, then sent him off with great honor... (*J.* II, p. 166)
(43) One time when the Buddha was traveling through Magadha with five hundred of his disciples, he entered a *brāhmaṇagāma* by the name of Khānumata and stayed there in the garden of Ambalaṭṭhikā. At that time, a brāhmaṇa by the name of Kūṭadanta was residing in the village. This village had been for the king's enjoyment (*rājabhogga*),[17] prosperous and full of grass, wood, water and crops, and was a *brahmadeyya* that had been granted by King Seniya Bimbisāra... The brāhmaṇas and household heads (*brāhmaṇa-gahapatikā*) of the village went en masse to Ambalaṭṭhikā garden. (*DN.* I, pp. 127-28)
(44) The king was overjoyed, and took a gold vessel filled with incense water and said, "Enjoy the fruits from the village located in the middle of the wheat fields in the east, as I would."[18] Then he poured the water on the *seṭṭhi*'s hands... (*J.* VI, p. 344)
(45) The king granted him (a hunter) such prestigious benefits as twelve villages with a total income of ten thousand cash, a carriage drawn by thoroughbred horses and a magnificent home to live in. (*J.* V, p. 371)

One characteristic feature of the history of land institutions in India is the donation of land and villages to brāhmaṇas, Hindu temples and the Buddhist *saṅgha*. Such a practice has drawn the attention of social and economic historians in connection with the debate over feudalism. The above items from the *Jātakas* are among the oldest accounts telling of villages being granted to brāhmaṇas. Accounts like item (41) abound in the collection of tales. In item (42) a brāhmaṇa was granted the vil-

[16] *J.* I, pp. 194-95.
[17] *Rājabhogga* was a term with the general meaning of "the king's land." I have interpreted it here as meaning the village "to be enjoyed by the king" which was granted to a brāhmaṇa as alms.
[18] "*Rājabhogena bhuñja*" can also be translated "accept and use as a gift from the king."

lage in which he had been residing as *brahmadeyya*.[19] The "*brahma*" in the term "*brahmadeyya*" (Skt. *brahmadeya*) means "brāhmaṇa" in later times, and the whole term is used to mean the giving of alms to a brāhmaṇa. However, according to T.W. Rhys-Davids, the term is used in the *Pāli* sources to mean "a most excellent gift," "a royal gift," and "a gift given with full powers," and therefore, was not necessarily limited solely to brāhmaṇa recipients.[20] Such grants of villages to brāhmaṇas, or anyone else for that matter, like in items (44) and (45), did not involve handing over ownership rights, but rather the right to enjoy the various tax income from the village (and possibly the right to participate in administering it);[21] that is, the same rights enjoyed by the *gāmabhojakas* mentioned in items (9) through (13). Furthermore, whenever a brāhmaṇa recipient went to reside in the granted village, a *brāhmaṇagāma* would result.[22] In addition to brāhmaṇas, royal ministers (13) and *seṭṭhis* (15) (44), recipients also included a barber and an expert in the art of hurling.[23] Item (44) relates that on the occasion of such a grant, a ceremony would be performed. Whether or not recipients were allowed to pass on their grants to their descendents is not clear; however, from later examples, we assume that rights enjoyed by brāhmaṇas were in fact inheritable.

H. Reclamation

(46) In olden times, when the king of Magadha ruled in Rājagaha, there was a brāhmaṇa village by the name of Sālindiya located northeast of the capital, and northeast of that was where the paddy of Magadha were located. A brāhmaṇa who resided in Sālindiya by the name of Kosiyagotta owned paddy totaling one thousand *karīsas* in size, where he planted rice. When the grain ripened, he would build strong fences around it, and entrusted five hundred *karīsas* of paddy to his servants, fifty or sixty *karīsas* each for safekeeping; and the remaining five hundred to one hired laborer. The latter built a hut nearby and resided in it day and night... He thought to himself, "If these [parrots] continue to devour the rice any longer, there may remain nothing, and the brāhmaṇa will probably count the [lost] rice and make me pay for it. I will go and report to him what is happening"... (*J.* IV, pp. 276-78)

[19] Although the passage "*nivāsanagāma c'assa*" can also be interpreted as "the village where he is going to live," from the context "the village in which he is living" seems more appropriate.

[20] *Pāli-English Dictionary*, s.v. *Brahma*. There is an account of a peasant receiving the village in which he lived as *brahmadeyya* (*J.* II, p. 310).

[21] T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, London, 5th Impression in 1917, p. 48.

[22] *Brāhmaṇagāma* could take two forms: 1) a village occupied by mainly brāhmaṇa families, and 2) a village occupied by non-brāhmaṇa cultivators, which was granted to a brāhmaṇa by the king. Many examples of *brāhmaṇagāma* in the Buddhist literature, but in many cases it is difficult to discern which form it took.

[23] *J.* I, pp. 138, 420; VI, p. 96.

(47) Long ago there was a brāhmaṇa village to the east of Rājagaha by the name of Sālindiya. At that time, the bodhisatta was born to a farmer-brāhmaṇa family there, and when he reached adulthood, he became a householder and cultivated a large plot of land totaling one thousand *karīsas* to the northeast of the village in the Magadha paddy lands. One day when he and his men went into the fields, he ordered his hirelings to plow, then went to wash his face in the large pond on the edge of the paddy. (*J.* III, p. 293)

(48) One time when the Buddha was staying in the brāhmaṇa village of Ekanāḷā in Magadha's Dakkhināgiri, it came time to sow, so the five hundred plows owned by brāhmaṇa Kasī-Bhāradvāja were attached to the yokes of the cattle. One morning the Buddha dressed, put on his outer garment [over his shoulder], took his bowl and approached the place where Kasī-Bhāradvāja was working. At that time Kasī-Bhāradvāja was distributing food [to his workers]; and the Buddha approached them and stood aloof. Kasī-Bhāradvāja then noticed that the Buddha was standing to receive food and said, "You see, *samaṇa*. I plow and sow seeds, then I eat. Plow and sow seeds, too, *samaṇa*. then you, eat." (*J.* I, p. 172)

(49) A brāhmaṇa who lived in Sāvatthī cut and cleared the forest on the bank of the Aciravatī River in order to cultivate paddy. (*J.* IV, p. 167)

(50) As soon as they see no more lion or tiger tracks, people will cut and clear the whole forest and gather together to cultivate paddy. (*J.* II, p. 357)

(51) In the mountains not far from where they (ascetics) were cloistered, a settlement was set up by the king [for the purpose of reclamation]. And when a large pond was dug and paddy constructed, the king made a thousand wealthy households move nearby to form a large village and had it give alms to the ascetics. (*J.* V, p. 35)

(52) On the day of the royal seed sowing ceremony, the whole town was decorated like a heavenly palace. Everyone, including slaves and servants, dressed in new suits of clothes, decorated themselves with perfume and flower wreaths and gathered at the palace. At the place that the king was to work, there were a thousand harnessed plows. One hundred and eight minus one plows were decorated in silver along with the cows and harnesses. The plow that the king was to use was decorated with red gold and its cow's horns, pins and harness were also decorated in gold. The king departed accompanied by a large entourage and his prince... The king was dressed in full regalia and was accompanied by his ministers to the plowing ground. There the king took his gold plow, his ministers the one hundred and eight minus one silver plows, and the rest were taken by peasants. They all began to plow here and there. The king

plowed everywhere from here to there and from there to here, acquiring a great amount of honor and prestige. (*J.* I, pp. 57-58)

Although it is not clear whether the brāhmaṇa village called Sālindiya mentioned in items (46) and (47) was populated mainly by brāhmaṇas or was a settlement granted as alms to a brāhmaṇa by the king (with the right to tax but no land ownership rights), in either case, the brāhmaṇa(s) there probably were expanding their holdings by either 1) self-reclamation or 2) employing slaves and/or hired laborers, or 3) merging together the holdings of peasants who had fallen into poverty. *Kammantagāma* seen in item (16) and *seṭṭhi* agricultural management seen in items (17) through (19) were probably also the result of wealthy families becoming interested in agrarian ventures. Brāhmaṇas becoming similarly interested and getting personally involved in land reclamation is evidenced by items (48) and (49). Item (50) is a good example to show the active reclamation work in those days. We can also assume that the state became involved in reclamation projects, as indirectly suggested by item (51). Item (52) describes a yearly event held by the Sākiyas, from whom the Buddha was born, and in between the lines of the obviously exaggerated text we get an insight into the character of the chiefs of India's ancient tribal state.

I. Non-Agricultural Villages

(53) There was a village of carpenters (*vaḍḍhakigāma*) located near Benares, populated by five hundred members of that trade. They would travel to the upper reaches of the river by boat and go into the forest to cut trees for lumber... They would drag the trees to the riverbank, load them onto boats and float with them back down the river to town, where they built houses to their owners' specifications and earned money. After that, they used to travel back up the river to fetch more lumber. (*J.* II, p. 18)

(54) The bodhisatta was born in Kāsi to a family of blacksmiths, and by the time he came of age, he had learned the trade completely. However, his parents were poor. Not far from his village was another village of blacksmiths (*kammāragāma*) populated by one thousand families of the trade. The head (*jeṭṭhaka*) blacksmith among them was favored by the king and had become wealthy... People from the surrounding villages would go there to have such implements as razors, axes, ploughshares and bars forged... (*J.* III, p. 281)

(55) Long ago there was a village of hunters (*nesādagāma*) located on the bank of the river not far from Benares and one on the opposite bank. Each village was populated by five hundred families. The heads of each village were friends, and in their youth they had made a pact that if one had a daughter and the other a son, they would have them marry. (*J.* VI, p. 71)

(56) At that time there was a village of caṇḍālas on the outskirts of Ujjenī... By the time [two caṇḍāla boys] came of age, they had learned the caṇḍāla art of *dhopana*. One day they decided to give a performance of the art at the city gates of Ujjenī. One performed at the north gate, while the other performed at the east gate. (*J.* IV, p. 390)

In items (53) and (54) we find villages on the outskirts of cities organized along the lines of specific occupations. Each village had a headman and occupations were passed down from generation to generation.[24] Although the residents of these villages probably served the local urban and rural populations, there is the possibility that their wares were sold on a wider scale by peddlers, as indicated by items (38) and (39). Items (55) and (56) relate that there were settlements of hunters and untouchables located on the outskirts of cities. Originally forest dwellers, these people retained their native customs, despite migrating to the suburbs. Both supplied the local population with forest products, including the meat of wild animals, and also engaged in earthwork and tasks looked upon as unclean.[25] We also know that there were port settlements (*paṭṭanagāma*), and villages of robbers (*coragāma*) and slaves (*dāsagāmaka*).[26] Market villages (*nigamagāma*) were smaller than *nagara/pura* (cities and towns) and formed the commercial centers of rural areas, playing an important role in the local economy. The *Jātakas* relate that these villages were populated by wealthy brāhmaṇas and *seṭṭhis*, and that they served as rich sources of alms for *bhikkhus*.[27] The Buddhist sources also mention villages of *ārāmikas*, unfree people who were donated to the Buddhist *saṅgha* to serve in various lay capacities.[28]

Concluding Remarks

From the sources presented here, we can divide the village in ancient India into two types: one that was organized for the purpose of agricultural production, the other

[24] There is an account similar to item (54) in the *Mahāvastu* (II, pp. 83-89). The main character, the son of a village head, announces that he wants to marry the daughter of the head of a village of blacksmiths, but is refused by the woman's father because he is not a blacksmith by trade.
[25] See Chapter XI.
[26] *J.* IV, pp. 137, 430: *Apadāna*, II, p. 538.
[27] *J.* II, p. 232; III, pp. 79, 93: *J.* II, p. 225: *J.* II, p. 209.
[28] *VP.* I, pp. 207-08; III, pp. 248-49.

for non-agricultural purposes.[29] The former type can be further divided into normal agrarian settlements and villages that were donated. In the former, arable was owned by either cultivators or large-scale landowners, both paying taxes, mainly a fixed portion of their harvests, to the king. The latter were villages donated by the king to certain individuals (mostly brāhmaṇas) or religious communities enabling them to enjoy the taxes which the king himself collected. Villages organized for non-agricultural purposes were populated by members of the same occupation on the basis of either trade, ethnicity, or social status. Among agricultural villages there were probably those directly managed by the king, whose residents did not own the land, but were either paid wages or given tenancy. According to the *Arthaśāstra,* such royal plantations seem to have been prevalent during the reign of the Mauryan Dynasty, but there is little about them in the Pāli sources.

In the ordinary agrarian villages, which were by far the most prevalent, the residents were closely tied together, holding meetings in the central plaza and cooperating in earthwork projects. However, it is clear that arable land was held on an individual (family) basis and that the size of holdings varied, as did income levels. Furthermore, there were very large landowners from among wealthy local gentry and rich urban merchants, who employed slaves and/or hired labor to cultivate their holdings. Villages were neither cloistered from the rest of society nor economically self-sufficient, but occasionally enjoyed economic contact with the outside world directly or through the mediation of merchants.

All in all, what the Pāli sources have to say about village life in ancient India has its limits both in terms of quantity and quality; nevertheless, they certainly convey an image of an era characterized by lively and growing agricultural activity, which no doubt made possible the great leap forward experienced by the Magadha Kingdom.

Appendix: Rural Society and Land Ownership as Seen in the *Manu-smṛti* and the *Arthaśāstra**

While there are rough differences between the ways in which these two sources describe village life in ancient India, they are in general agreement concerning the agrarian village landscape, its residents, individual land ownership and land for collective use, boundary questions, the remittance of taxes to the king via collectors,

[29] The Pāli sources also mention *dvāragāma* and *paccantagāma*. *Dvāragāma* indicates a village formed outside the city gates (*dvāra*), while *paccantagāma* refers to a frontier (*paccanta*) village, which was constantly threatened by foreign invasion or brigandage (*J.* III, p. 33). See also items (13) and (29).

* This Appendix is the summary of my article entitled "Villages and Land-ownership in Ancient India."

and the supervision of rural areas. However, there are many conflicting items, and it should be kept in mind that both sources are theoretical works, meaning that their accounts do not necessarily reflect reality or practice. Therefore, in order to come to an accurate understanding of rural northern India in ancient times, one must compare these sources with more reliable materials, like the available epigraphy. However, a serious dearth of the latter from periods before Christ leaves many problems still unsolved.

In any case, regarding the social status of agrarian peasants, the *Manu-smṛti* states that in principle they should belong to the vaiśya varṇa and that śūdras should not be allowed to own land. In contrast, the *Arthaśāstra* recognizes śūdra involvement in agriculture to the extent of stating that śūdras sometimes could make ideal peasants. The *Manu-smṛti*'s scheme of "vaiśyas in agriculture, animal husbandry, commerce" and "śūdras in servitude" represents rural society when Aryans first settled in the upper reaches of the Ganga; while in the middle and lower reaches at the time the *Arthaśāstra* appeared, although the varṇa social order still existed, definite ambiguity had arisen over the vaiśya and śūdra character of the peasantry. Although there is the opinion that the *Manu-smṛti*'s equation of varṇa with occupation was being maintained in the upper reaches of the Ganga at the time the work appeared, it is my opinion that its orthodox brāhmaṇa compilers were merely holding to the ideals of the varṇa system, rather than reflecting what was happening in practice at the time of compilation.

Next, concerning the activities and composition of rural communities, the *Manu-smṛti* contains very little concrete information about related customs or practices. Instead, it tends to harp on the involvement of kings in rural matters out of their obligation to protect their subjects. That is to say, village heads were placed at the lowest level of rural administration, and kings were not only obligated to intervene in intervillage disputes, but also play the role of arbitrator over internal village matters regarding crime and disputes. The *Arthaśāstra* of course recognizes the fact that kings should intervene in village matters as rulers, but is more concerned with the activities of the peasantry as the members of rural communities. Villagers were to work and conduct their festivals communally, and their village heads and elders were responsible for the public safety of the community and maintaining its social order. The disposition of land by the villagers was to be regulated according to local custom, and the village community sometimes offered the use of its communal land to outsiders. Despite emphasis on the necessity of communal consciousness and activities among villagers, arable land is described as being owned on an individual basis, and there were wealthy members of the community who employed both hired laborers and slaves to work their land.

One of the characteristics of rural India in later times was the existence of many kinds of tradespeople living in a village, and untouchables living on its outskirts and participating in both defiling occupations and agricultural labor. However,

neither the *Manu-smṛti* nor the *Arthaśāstra* mention much about any division of labor among community members within the village; and it is not clear whether the "village and local associations (*grāma-deśa-saṅgha*)" found in the former (VIII, 219) or the "village's hired laborers (*grāmabhṛtaka*)" found in the latter (II, 1, 11; III, 11, 28-29; V, 2, 11; V, 3, 23) indicate the existence of various tradespeople in ordinary villages. Furthermore, while both mention the existence of untouchables in rural society, there is no reference to them performing agricultural labor.

Rural communities are not always exclusionary. The *Arthaśāstra* mentions that villages conclude contracts with outsiders concerning their participation in cultivation and other work tasks. The land lent to them might not have been individually owned but rather managed and supervised collectively. Not only cultivators, but brāhmaṇas and some non-agrarian tradespeople also concluded contracts with the villagers, were accepted into the community and over the years or generations became full-fledged indispensable village members.

Land ownership rights were shared among the three different levels of the king, the rural community and the individual cultivator; and differences of opinion arise as to which level held sway. If we limit the meaning of ownership to what is described in the works of Hindu law, we can say that during normal times in the general agrarian village things like houses and arable land were "owned" on an individual basis by villagers. And while it is impossible to tell how often such transactions as sales and pledges of land were conducted, we can assume that the freedom to dispose of one's land was probably restricted by overall village customs and practices. Unreclaimed land, pasture, forestland, shrine sites, etc. were used collectively by villagers, but such land was also strongly influenced by kingship. According to the *Arthaśāstra*, the king was regarded as the owner of land that was reclaimed by state-conducted colonization and had prerogatives over unreclaimed land, forestland, mines, marshland, etc. However, during normal times, the king did not infringe on the rights of individual villagers to arable land.

According to both sources, individual peasants (i.e. peasant families) became the objects of taxation, and the ledgers kept by tax collectors mentioned in the *Arthaśāstra* were created for the purpose of ascertaining the assets of every household in the village and its ability to pay taxes. There is at least one kind of tax that was to be borne by the whole village, but it seems to have been secondary. Taxes were thought to be compensation to the king for protecting his subjects. And their collection was linked to the *raison d'être* of the varṇa system: the kṣatriyas protecting their subjects through *daṇḍa* in accordance with the *rāja-dharma*, and the two lower varṇas supporting them with labor, money and goods in kind.

From the formative period of Buddhism (6th-5th BC) through the reign of the Mauryan Dynasty (4th-2nd BC), agriculture, handicrafts and commerce developed rapidly, and the middle and lower reaches of the Ganga were quickly opened. Together with the reclamation efforts of individuals and groups, the state carried

out relocation and colonization projects as seen in the *Arthaśāstra*. The Buddhist sources also describe brāhmaṇas and wealthy merchants turning to agriculture, resulting in huge, expansive irrigated rice lands. It was upon this backdrop of agricultural, social and economic development that villages and rural life as described in this chapter came into existence.

Part Four ŚŪDRAS AND CAṆḌĀLAS: THE SERVILE CLASS AND UNTOUCHABLES

Chapter IX ŚŪDRAS: THE SERVILE VARṆA

Before going into the main discussion on ancient India's fourth varṇa, the śūdras, let us first summarize their origins. To begin with, concerning the etymology of the term *śūdra*, tradition explains that it was either derived from *śuc*, meaning to moan and suffer, or from the adjective *kṣudra*, meaning petty or inferior.[1] However, such explanations are merely the result of assumptions deriving from the ex post facto attributes of śūdras, not the word itself. In contrast, much of the research done to date argues that the term refers to the name of a tribe living in northwestern India at the time that Aryans of Vedic persuasion entered the region. There are scholars who point to the Sodrais living in Sind during the invasion of Alexander the Great or the Sydrois of southeast Afghanistan mentioned by Ptolemy in *The Geography* as the descendants of original śūdras. While both explanations can hardly be called adequate, it is probably most likely that the term śūdra did originate from the name of some tribe. On the other hand, there is no conclusive evidence to prove whether the earliest śūdras were of Aryan origin or ethnically different indigenous people.[2] All that we can state for sure is that a tribe called "Śūdra" was placed under the rule of Vedic Aryans in one way or another, and through some process the name of the tribe eventually became the general term referring to the whole servile varṇa of ancient Indian society.

The term śūdra does not appear in the *Ṛg Veda* (except for the *Puruṣa-sūkta* that was added during the following period), meaning that the Śūdra people were probably subjected to Aryan rule around the end of the Early Vedic Age (1500-1000 BC). Furthermore, the formation of this servile stratum within the varṇa system probably occurred during the mid-Later Vedic Age (around 800 B.C.), after Aryans moved into the upper reaches of the Ganga.

There is no doubt that there were Aryans who were demoted to the śūdra varṇa for such reasons as means of livelihood, illegitimate marriage and defeat in war. However, the main body of the group that was placed within the four-varṇa system as śūdras was composed of indigenous peoples of the upper Ganga basin who had

[1] On the etymology of śūdra, see R. S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India*, 2nd rev. ed., Delhi, 1980, pp. 42-44.

[2] N. K. Dutt, *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, Vol. I, pp. 50-53. R. S. Sharma, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-40. The former adopts the ethnically different (aboriginal) viewpoint, and the latter the Aryan argument.

been subjugated during the Aryan migration into the region. Although, it must be pointed out that the term "Aryan" does not always mean a group racially or ethnically different from those indigenous peoples they conquered, because the Aryans by that time had been already in the process of integrating both culturally and racially the indigenous peoples they encountered. There might also have been Aryanized members of the latter who insisted that they were "Aryan" in terms of both language and religious belief. Therefore, we should understand the Aryans who advanced into the Ganga basin as groups who spoke a common language and practiced the same religion.

The four-varṇa system that was formed during the Later Vedic Age would be theoretically and ideologically crystallized in the *Dharmasūtras* by orthodox brāhmaṇas based in the upper Ganga basin (the *Doāb*). What these books of Vedic law have to say about the śūdra varṇa is at times conflicting, but overall they give us a very good idea of the brāhmaṇa view of that class.

1. Śūdras in the *Dharmasūtras*

A. Duties and Lifestyle

Members of the śūdra varṇa were "once-born," that is, born from the womb only (*ekaja, ekajāti*)[3] without the second birth realized in the *upanayana* initiation ceremony that the other three varṇas (*dvija, dvijāti*) passed though. As to the mythical origins of the śūdras, the *Baudhāyana* (I, 10, 18, 5-6) employs the creation myth dating back to the "*Puruṣa-sūkta*" contained in the *Ṛg Veda*, which states that the original śūdra was born from the feet of the Creator, and concludes that this is why śūdras are destined to serve the upper three varṇas born from the Creator's mouth, arms and thighs, respectively. It is such service (*paricaryā, śuśrūṣā*) to the three upper varṇas that constitutes the main duty attributed to śūdras.[4] All śūdras were to show the utmost respect to the upper three varṇas, regardless of age,[5] and the merit they received for the labor services rendered to their masters increased in proportion to how high the latter were ranked in society.[6] There were three attributes required of the essential śūdra character: honesty, docility and cleanliness.[7] On the other hand, the *Vāsiṣṭha* (VI, 24) states that the essential śūdra nature includes enmity, jealousy, falsehood, hostility towards brāhmaṇas, slander, and cruelty, which is

[3] *Gaut.* X, 50.

[4] *Gaut.* X, 56. *Āp.* I, 1, 1, 6. *Vās.* II, 20.

[5] *Gaut.* VI, 11. But, a man of over eighty years, even a śūdra, must be honourd by the young (VI, 10).

[6] *Āp.* I, 1, 1, 7.

[7] *Gaut.* X, 51.

a straight forward way of encouraging brāhmaṇas to look down upon śūdras and not to trust them.

As to what kind of labor services śūdras were to perform, they involved menial tasks such as washing the feet of their masters and houseguests.[8] They sometimes cooked for their masters and their families, but in principle always under *dvija* supervision. Those śūdras who were entrusted with the cooking were required to be particularly fastidious; gargling before work, cutting their hair and fingernails daily, shaving their beards and body hair, bathing in their clothing, etc.[9] According to the *Āpastamba* (II, 2, 3, 9), the food that was prepared by śūdras was fit to offer to the gods after it was placed on the fire and sprinkled with water.

Śūdras who worked as household servants (*pādāvanektṛ*: those who earn a living by washing feet) appear on lists of tax exempt subjects.[10] Although it is certain that there were śūdras who engaged in cultivation, the *Dharmasūtras* have nothing specific to say about it. Concerning the legitimate avenues open to the vaiśya and śūdras to earn income, the *Gautama* (X, 40-42) employs the term "*nirviṣṭa*" (gains) acquired through labor: agriculture, herding and commerce for the former and service for the latter. According to the same *Gautama*, (X, 60), śūdras were given the opportunity to learn skilled trades (*śilpavṛtti*), suggesting that there were many śūdra artisans, who owed one day of corvee labor per month to the king as tax (X, 31). These artisans must have enjoyed much more social and economic independence than the other more servile members of their varṇa. The remuneration to be paid to śūdras by the upper varṇas include "used shoes, umbrellas, clothing and mats" and "leftover food."[11]

By such endeavors, śūdras were able to amass small amounts of wealth. The *Vāsiṣṭha* (XXVI, 16) states, "Kṣatriyas overcome their misfortune by strength in arms, vaiśyas and śūdras by the wealth they accumulate, brāhmaṇas by muttering prayers and burning oblations." There are also provisions which indicate that the wealth accumulated by śūdras was both inheritable and subject to seizure.[12] The interest to be charged to śūdra debtors was 5% per month, in contrast to 2% for brāhmaṇas, 3% for kṣatriyas, and 4% for vaiśyas.[13] It was by virtue of their earnings and accumulated wealth that śūdras were able to marry and raise families.[14] However, the *Gautama* (XVIII, 24) mentions that the wealth accumulated by śūdras

[8] *Āp.* II, 3, 6, 9-10; II, 10, 26, 15.

[9] *Āp.* II, 2, 3, 4-7. Or hair and fingernail care were to be done on the eighth day of every half month; or the days of the new and full moons (*Āp.* II, 2, 3, 8). On the aspect of bodily cleanliness, see *Baudh.* I, 5, 10, 20 and *Gaut.* X, 52.

[10] *Āp.* II, 10, 26, 15.

[11] *Gaut.* X, 57-59. Concerning leftover food, see also *Āp.* I, 1, 3, 41.

[12] *Āp.* I, 2, 7, 20; II, 10, 27, 16. *Gaut.* XII, 2, 15; XVIII, 24. *Baudh.* II, 2, 3, 9.

[13] *Vās.* II, 48.

[14] *Gaut.* X, 54-55.

had a subordinate character similar to their social status. That is to say, any poverty-stricken *dvija* was entitled to seize the property of a śūdra for ceremonial purposes. The same work tells *dvijas* that they are obligated to support their śūdra servants who cannot work due to illness or old age. On the other hand, it orders śūdras to lend support to masters who happen to fall into poverty with their accumulated wealth (X, 61-63).

Of the eight forms of marriage appearing in the ancient Indian sources, the ones suitable for śūdras are *gāndharva* (the fifth form involving love) and *paiśāca* (the eighth form involving abducting women in an unconscious state, like sleep or inebriation).[15].The wives of the lower two varṇas were less restricted than those of the two upper ones.[16] Regarding the period of time a wife was obliged to wait for her husband to return from a journey, the *Vāsiṣṭha* (XVII, 78) states,

> A brāhmaṇa wife with children, five years, without children, four years; a kṣatriya wife with children, five years, without children, three years; a vaiśya wife with children, four years, without children, two years; a śūdra wife with children, three years, without children, one year.

B. Ritual Status

Due to their *ekaja* origins, śūdras were not permitted to either study the Veda or participate in orthodox ceremonies, thus their ritual status was identical to the male members of the three *dvija* varṇas prior to initiation.[17] Such non-participation in ceremonies also made them identical to *dvija* women, with whom śūdras frequently appear in the provisions of orthodox law.[18] However, in contrast to *dvija* children who would be initiated into *dvija* ranks at around the age of ten and *dvija* women who often accompanied their husbands at ceremonies, śūdras were seen as innate-

[15] *Baudh.* I, 11, 20, 13. However, the annotator Govinda attributes *gāndharva* marriage to vaiśyas and *paiśāca* marriage to śūdras (Bühler's tr. p. 207, note 13. Pāṇḍeya's ed., p. 143.). There is also the interpretation that *gāndharva* marriage is appropriate for any varṇa (*Baudh.* I, 11, 20, 16.). The *Manu-smṛti* (III, 20-39) recognizes *gāndharva* marriage as appropriate for any varṇa and *paiśāca* marriage as appropriate for all except brāhamaṇas.

[16] *Baudh.* I, 11, 20, 14-15.

[17] *Āp.* I, 1, 1, 5. *Vās.* IV, 3: *Vās.* II, 6. *Baudh.* I, 2, 3, 6.

[18] For example, the prohibition on conversation with each of the two during ceremonial periods (*Vās.* XXIV, 5. *Baudh.* III, 8, 17; IV, 5, 4), and on travelling together (*Baudh.* II, 3, 6, 22), similarly simple purification procedures for both (*Vās.* III, 34. *Baudh.* I, 5, 8, 22-23), and atonement for slander and false speaking (*Āp.* I, 9, 26, 4-5). The *Āpastamba* (II, 11, 29, 11) says that the knowledge possessed by women and śūdras exists at the "end" of all studies. Bühler interprets this to mean that the knowledge women and śūdras possess in such areas as music, dance, the practical matters is not all (or the first things) that *dvijas* are supposed to learn; i.e., the first thing that *dvijas* are supposed to learn is the Veda (Bühler's tr., p. 169, note).

ly defiling and invalidating Vedic study and the holding of ceremonies. The Veda was never to be recited in such places as "near a śūdra," "in a house where a śūdra resided," "anywhere that a śūdra could see or hear," thus placing śūdras within the same category as "graveyards, corpses, *patitas* (criminals deprived of varṇa status) or untouchables."[19] Teaching anything to śūdras was also prohibited, as was giving them leftovers from offerings made to the gods. "Anyone who teaches the *dharma* to a śūdra and calls him to vowed observance is damned to sink into frightful Asaṃvṛta hell together with that very śūdra."[20]

Since food and drink consumed by *dvijas* had to be ritually pure, eating anything brought, cooked or leftover by a śūdra was in principle taboo,[21] even water drawn by one.[22] According to the *Āpastamba* (I, 5, 17, 1), anyone who was touched by a śūdra during a meal was to stop eating immediately. Prohibitions pertaining to brāhmaṇas were especially strict in that respect.

Nevertheless, in reality it was virtually impossible to avoid coming into contact with "śūdra food." One characteristic feature of the *Dharmasūtras* is, as we have seen over and over again, to wax eloquent in theory and then provide loopholes for dealing with reality. In the case of "śūdra food" (and every related taboo for that matter), the *dvija* consumer is provided with some purification ritual or method of atonement.[23] We have already encountered in the previous section the provision that permits *dvijas* to eat "śūdra food" prepared under *dvija*'s supervision. The *Gautama* (XVII, 5-6) allows to accept food from a śūdra in the case that the *dvija* has no other way to sustain life; then mentions that the food prepared by herders, cultivators, acquaintances, barbers and servants can be eaten, although barbers and servants were no doubt members of the śūdra varṇa.[24] While śūdras were prohibited from ceremonies in which the Vedic *mantras* were chanted, they had

[19] *Āp*. I, 3, 9, 9-11. *Gaut*. XVI, 19. *Vās*. XVIII, 11-13. *Baudh*. I, 11, 21, 15.

[20] *Vās*. XVIII, 14-15. The same provision forbids giving ordinary leftover food (*ucchiṣṭa*) to śūdras. However, this contradicts the previously introduced "gains" accruing to śūdras. The *Manu-smṛti* (IV, 80-81) contains the same prohibition on *ucchiṣṭa*, but annotator Kullūka says that it does not apply to śūdras serving *dvijas* (*āśritaśūdra*, *dāsaśūdra*) (Kullūka on *Manu*, IV, 80; X, 125). Incidentally, the remains of food offered to the gods by students who broke their vows of continence would be given to śūdras (*Āp*. I, 9, 26, 8-9).

[21] *Āp*. I, 5, 16, 22; I, 6, 18, 13; II, 8, 18, 2. *Vās*. VI, 26-29; XIV, 4. *Baudh*. III, 6, 5; IV, 1, 5. If we interpret "*vṛṣala*" to mean śūdra, then following two provisions. *Vās*. X, 31. *Baudh*. II, 2, 3, 1. Also see *Āp*. I, 7, 21, 17. *Vās*. XIV, 33.

[22] *Gaut*. IX, 11.

[23] For example, *atikṛcchra* penance (*Vās*. XIV, 33), *prasṛtiyāvaka* penance of eating barley boiled while chanting *mantras* (*Baudh*. III, 6, 5), and holding one's breath seven times a day for seven days (*Baudh*. IV, 1, 5).

[24] The *Manu-smṛti* (IV, 253) and the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* (I, 166) allow food prepared by sharecroppers, family friends, cowherds, slaves, barbers and those professing to be slaves, even if of the śūdra varṇa, to be eaten by *dvijas*.

their own rites of passage, some of which were similar to those of *dvijas*. The *Dharmasūtras* have nothing derogatory to say about these rituals. To the contrary, the *Gautama* (X, 64-65) allows śūdras to conduct their own *pākayajñas* (the seven minor household rituals) and allows them to chant one acceptable *mantra*, "*namaḥ*."[25] Śūdras may also conduct their own oblations for ancestors (*śrāddha*).[26] The period of mourning (ritual pollution) upon the death of relatives (*sapiṇḍa*) was one month for śūdras, as opposed to ten days for brāhmaṇas, eleven days for kṣatriyas and twelve days or half a month for vaiśyas.[27]

Entertaining guests was considered one of the religious obligations for *dvijas*, and there were differences in how to deal with guests depending on one's varṇa. In the case of śūdra guests, the *Āpastamba* (II, 2, 4, 19-20) states, "When śūdra guests arrive, [brāhmaṇas] are to give them some kind of work to do, and feed them when the work is done, or slaves [of the brāhmaṇa household] shall fetch [rice] from the royal storehouse and honor them as guests." The *Gautama* (V, 44-45) states, "Kṣatriya [guests] are to be received with food after brāhmaṇa [guests]. Concerning other [vaiśya, śūdra] guests, [they should be fed] together with the servants (*bhṛtaka*) out of mercy [befitting a master]."[28]

There were also differences among the varṇas concerning saluting. According to the *Āpastamba* (I, 2, 5, 16), brāhmaṇas were to be greeted with the right hand raised to the height of the ear, kṣatriyas with the right hand at breast height, vaiśyas with the hand at hip [or stomach or thigh] height, and śūdras with the hand below that (leg height). The same work (I, 4, 14, 26-29) also states that brāhmaṇas should be greeted with the word "*kuśala*" (Are you happy?), kṣatriyas with the "*anāmaya*" (Are you healthy?), vaiśyas with "*anaṣṭa*" (I hope you haven't suffered any losses.) and śūdras with "*ārogya*" (Are you free from disease?), while the *Gautama* (V, 41-42) determines "*ārogya*" for both vaiśyas and śūdras.

C. Marriage

Dvija men were obliged to marry women of their own varṇas and bear sons by them, thus continuing the family line and pacifying the spirits of its ancestors through ceremonies (*śrāddha*) performed by each generation. On the other hand, it

[25] Cf. *Gaut*. VIII, 18. One *Gautama* manuscript allows śūdras to conduct ceremonies common to Aryans related to pregnancy, male childbirth, pregnant women, birth, naming of children, first walk in the air, first food, haircutting, etc. as long as they do not chant Vedic *mantras*; however, Bühler raised doubts about the authenticity of the document. Bühler's tr., pp. 229-30, note. Pāṇḍeya's ed., p. 104.

[26] *Gaut*. X, 53. Of course, Vedic *mantra* chanting was prohibited. Pāṇḍeya's ed., p. 104.

[27] *Gaut*. XIV, 1-5. The *Vāsiṣṭha* (IV, 26-29) stipulates 10 days, 15 days, 20 days and one month in the cases of both birth and death.

[28] *Vāsiṣṭha* (XI, 10) prescribes that a portion of leftover food or fresh food should be given to a śūdra guest.

was discouraged as a defiling act for any *dvija* male to have sexual intercourse with a śūdra woman and was strictly forbidden during times when religious ceremonies were being held.[29]

The *Dharmasūtras* are divided over whether a śūdra woman could marry a *dvija* male. While the *Vāsiṣṭha* (I, 24-27) forbids such an act from a strictly orthodox standpoint,[30] the *Baudhāyana* (I, 8, 16, 2-6) determines that men of each of the four varṇas may marry women in the order of those varṇas, thus leaving the possibility to admit the marriage between *dvija* men and śūdra women. This latter work goes on to state that any child born to a wife of the next lower varṇa was considered to have the same varṇa (*savarṇa*) as his father. However, the same work amends this somewhat, stating that children born from vaiśya male-śūdra female marriage would be designated not as vaiśya but rather *rathakāra*, an inferior class engaged in woodworking, thus adopting a definitely negative attitude towards śūdras.[31] The *Gautama* (IV, 22-23), on the other hand, states, "Varṇa status can be changed after seven or five generations," to which the annotator adds, "If a daughter born to a vaiśya male-śūdra female marries a vaiśya" and this practice continues for five or seven generations, the descendants will then be considered members of the vaiśya varṇa.[32] However, for all practical purposes, the only way actually open to śūdras in general for improving their varṇa status was to perform their duties throughout their present lives and be reborn into higher varṇas in their next lives.[33]

Śūdra women who married members of higher varṇas were in principle relegated to the status of minor wives. Those *dvijas* who married only śūdra women (*śūdrāpati, vṛṣalīpati*) were looked upon by the *Dharmasūtras* as ritually polluted; their food was forbidden to be received and they were prohibited from attending their ancestor worship ceremonies. They were even told that the gods would never eat any food offered by them.[34] Moreover, the *Baudhāyana* (II, 3, 6, 32) states that any brāhmaṇa who takes only a śūdra bride (*vṛṣalīpati*) and lives in a village where

[29] *Baudh.* IV, 1, 5; IV, 2, 13; IV, 6, 6. *Gaut.* XV, 22; XXV, 7. *Vās.* XI, 37; XVIII, 17-18.
[30] The *Gautama* (IV, 25-26) states that children born between śūdra women and men of higher varṇas should be considered "*dharmahīna*" (existing outside of the holy *dharma*).
[31] In the case of children born of wives of varṇas two ranks below that of the husband were not given the latter's varṇa. Children born between brāhmaṇa males and vaiśya females were considered to be a mulatto group called Ambaṣṭha. See also Table I of p. 215.
[32] The *Manu-smṛti* (X, 64-65) determines that if śūdra women and their daughters marry brāhmaṇas for seven generations, their children will become brāhmaṇas.
[33] *Āp.* II, 5, 11, 10. Pāṇḍeya's ed., p. 43.
[34] *Āp.* I, 6, 18, 33. *Gaut.* XI, 18. *Vās.* XIV, 11. In a list enumerating those who defile ancestor worship ceremonies we find "the śūdra son of a brāhmaṇa woman." The annotator Haradatta explains that he is a son borne between "a brāhmaṇa whose first wife is of śūdra origin" and "a brāhmaṇa woman". *Āp.* II, 7, 17, 21. Bühler's tr., p. 144, note 21.

he obtains water only from the well for twelve years will become the equivalent of a śūdra.

All of the above discussion involves the practice of *anuloma*: that is, acceptable marriages between males of higher varṇas than those of their wives. The opposite case of marriages involving females of higher varṇa than their husbands, or *pratiloma*, was strictly forbidden and has been pointed to as the origin of groups with sub-varṇa inferior social status. This was especially true of śūdra males marrying above their varṇa. As we have seen, the *Dharmasūtras* argue that the group of untouchables, the caṇḍālas, were the result of the worst case of *pratiloma* committed between brāhmaṇa females and śūdra males.[35]

Of course, the same works did not forget to specify purification rites for the act of having sexual relations with a śūdra woman. Examples include "bathing while reciting songs of praise to Water or to Varuṇa, or reciting some other purification prayer,"[36] and "holding one's breathe (*prāṇāyāma*) seven times a day for a period of seven days."[37] Furthermore, while condemning the act of bearing a son by a śūdra woman as a crime worthy of banishment from one's caste (II, 1, 2, 7), the *Baudhāyana* also provides a rite of purification for the father (II, 1, 2, 9-10; IV, 6, 6).

The *Dharmasūtras* differ over the question of whether or not a child born between a *dvija* male and a śūdra female was entitled to inherit his father's property. First, the *Baudhāyana* (II, 2, 3, 10) states, "In the case of sons born of wives of different varṇas, the property will be divided into ten parts, then allocated according to the child's varṇa at the rates of four, three, two and one part," thus displaying a relatively tolerant attitude towards śūdra wives and their offspring. On the other hand, the *Vāsiṣṭha* (XVII, 38-39) in a provision concerning "six types of child considered kin but not heirs" includes sons of śūdra women (*śūdrāputra*) as the sixth type, specifying that they can inherit if there are none of the six types of sons who are able to inherit. The *Gautama* (XXVIII, 39) states that even the son of a śūdra woman, as long as he is obedient, can be given a living allowance from the inheritance if there are no other male heirs, thus allowing inheritance on a conditional basis.

D. Crime and Punishment

Of the crimes committed by śūdras, the most worrisome for the *Dharmasūtras* were those that offended *dvijas* in some way. To begin with, concerning religious offenses, as we have already seen, the *Gautama* (XII, 4-6) warns,

[35] *Gaut.* IV, 18, 25, 27-28. *Vās.* XVIII, 1. *Baudh.* I, 9, 17, 7.
[36] *Āp.* I, 9, 26, 7. *Gaut.* XXV, 7. *Baudh.* IV, 2, 13.
[37] *Baudh.* IV, 1, 5.

> A śūdra who intentionally listens to the recitation of the Veda is to have molten tin or lac poured into his ears. A śūdra who chants the Veda is to have his tongue cut out. A śūdra who remembers the Veda is to be split in twain.

It is doubtful whether such punishment was actually meted out to anyone, but we get a good idea of how serious orthodox brāhmaṇas were about excluding śūdras from their Vedic rituals.

Śūdras who approached *dvija* women were also to be severely punished. For example, the *Gautama* (XII, 2-3) states,

> Any śūdra having sexual intercourse with an *ārya* woman is to have his penis severed and his property seized. If she has a protector, he is to be executed after infliction [of the above punishments].[38]

The *Baudhāyana* (II, 2, 3, 52) calls for "burning to death in a pyre of straw" in the case of adultery involving a śūdra man and *ārya* woman,[39] while the *Āpastamba* (II, 10, 27, 9) calls for the "death penalty."[40] The *ārya* women involved were also to be punished; purification through atonement if a child did not result, otherwise, purification would not be possible.[41]

The *Gautama* (XXIII, 14-15) also contains a provision stating,

> The king is to have any woman who commits adultery with a man of a lower varṇa eaten by dogs in a public place and then have the man executed.

This indicates that, in theory, such severe punishment was meted out not in the case of śūdras, but all cases of adultery considered to be *protiloma* in nature. The *Vāsiṣṭha* (XXI, 1) states,

> In the case of adultery between a śūdra man and a brāhmaṇa woman, the king is to have the śūdra bound with *vīraṇa*-grass and thrown into a fire, then have the woman's head shaved, her body smeared with butter, mounted naked on a

[38] The term proctector (*goptā*) probably refers to a husband or close kin (*Manu*, VIII, 374). Bühler and Olivelle adopt this meaning in their translations; however, one annotated version interprets the protector as the śūdra; that is, the śūdra who was a servant of the woman whom he was obligated to protect (Pāṇḍeya's, ed., p. 117). Kane follows this interpretation. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. II-1, pp. 159-60.

[39] On the other hand, the punishment for adultery between members of the same *dvija* varṇa was one year of penance for the male offenders. *Baudh*. II, 2, 3, 51. Bühler's tr., p. 232, note.

[40] However, *dvija* men who committed adultery with śūdra women were to be exiled. *Āp*. II, 10, 27, 8.

[41] *Vās*. XXI, 12. cf. *Āp*. II, 10, 27, 10. *Baudh*. II, 2, 3, 49.

> black mule and drawn through the streets in order to purify her.

This provision is followed by similar punishments for kṣatriyas and vaiśyas who approach brāhmaṇa women, with the exception of different varieties of grass for the men and different colored mules for the women. About the same punishment was also called for in the case of adultery committed between a vaiśya man and kṣatriya woman and a śūdra man and either a vaiśya or kṣatriya woman (XXI, 2-5). Such provisions indicate the pains that the compilers of the *Dharmasūtras* went to in trying to prevent the varṇa system's prescribed marriage rules (especially those regarding *pratiloma*) from being violated.[42]

Turning to offenses committed by śūdras against *dvijas* in the course of everyday life, the *Gautama* states that corporal punishments await any śūdra who demands the same position as *dvijas* concerning seating, lying down, conversation, walking in the street, etc. (XII, 7);[43] and that any śūdra who dares abuse a *dvija* either verbally or physically "will lose the body part that committed the abuse" (XII, 1).[44] In contrast, such abuse committed by other varṇas were punished by various fines according to the vertical relationship between them and their victims, and "in the case of brāhmaṇas verbally abusing śūdras, no fine is necessary (XII, 8-14)."[45]

Concerning such capital crimes as murder, theft, land seizure, etc. on the part of śūdras, the *Āpastamba* (II, 10, 27, 16) states that "they will have their property seized, then be executed (*vadhyaḥ*)."[46] However, in the case of theft, the *Gautama* (XII, 15-16) states, "Śūdras will pay fines amounting to eight times the value of the goods stolen, while members of other varṇas will pay twice in the order of ascendency." In other words, vaiśyas would be fined sixteen times the value of the stolen goods, kṣatriyas thirty-two times, and brāhmaṇas sixty-four times. R. S. Sharma is of the opinion that in the background to the severity of such a provision in the order

[42] The translator of the *Vāsiṣṭha*, Bühler, adds a note saying that such severe punishment probably applied only to the most outrageous cases of inter-varṇa adultery. *Op. cit.*, pp. 109-10, note.

[43] The *Āpastamba* (II, 10, 27, 15) prescribes a flogging.

[44] Having one's tongue cut out in the case of verbal abuse is also mentioned in the *Āpastamba* (II, 10, 27, 14).

[45] According to an annotator, Haradatta, verbal abuse to a śūdra by either a kṣatriya or vaiśya was punishable by fines of 24 and 36 *paṇas* respectively. Bühler's tr., p. 237, note. Pāṇḍeya's ed., p. 119. The *Manu-smṛti* (VIII, 268) calls for a fine of 12 *paṇas* to be paid by brāhmaṇas who verbally abuse śūdras, while the *Āpastamba* (I, 9, 26, 3-4) calls for *dvijas* who either verbally abuse figures worthy of respect (such as a teacher), or speak an untruth, to abstain from milk, condiments and salt for three days; for śūdras who are guilty of the same to fast for seven days.

[46] The term *vadhyaḥ* can be interpreted as corporal punishment, which included also the death penalty.

of varṇa ascendency was 1) the poverty suffered by śūdras and 2) the responsibility for maintaining social morality demanded of the higher varṇas.[47]

On the other hand, it goes without saying that the punishment and atonement for the killing of a śūdra was not as severe as the killing of higher varṇas.[48] The *Dharmasūtras* are at odds over the question of whether killing a woman is the same as killing a śūdra or whether consideration should be taken of the woman's varṇa.[49] Also, both the *Āpastamba* and *Baudhāyana* contain provisions listing the names of certain animals the killing of which is equivalent to killing a śūdra in terms of atonement.[50]

Concerning witnesses, the *Vāsiṣṭha* (XVI, 30) states that women should testify in the case of women, *dvijas* in the case of *dvijas* of their varṇas, upstanding śūdras in the case of śūdras, and mixed-varṇa inferiors in the case of their peers. On the other hand, the *Gautama* (XIII, 2-3) says that any *dvija* or śūdra not party to the dispute, who is loyally fulfilling his duties and is trustworthy, is eligible to be a witness.[51]

2. Śūdras in the Buddhist Sources

As opposed to the *Dharmasūtras*, which reflect orthodox brāhmaṇa views from agrarian society in the upper reaches of the Ganga, the Buddhist sources, which reflect the newly rising urban society in the middle and lower reaches and represent a non-orthodox body of literature opposing the traditional ideas of brāhmaṇas, obviously present a rather different view of the śūdra varṇa.

The Pāli Buddhist sources, however, do not oppose the existence of the varṇa system,[52] relating that secular society is divided into four types of households; khat-

[47] R. S. Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

[48] *Gaut.* XXII, 14-15. *Āp.* I, 9, 24, 1-4. *Vās.* XX, 31-33. *Baudh.* I, 10, 19, 1-2; II, 1, 1, 8-10.

[49] Equates the two acts (*Gaut.* XXII, 17. *Baudh.* I, 10, 19, 3-5; II, 1, 1, 11-12), calls for the same atonement required in the case of killing a man (*Āp.* I, 9, 24, 5), orders atonement of one varṇa lower, i.e. if one kills a brāhmaṇa woman, the atonement is the same required for the killing of a kṣatriya man (*Vās.* XX, 34-40). In the case of killing a woman who has bathed after menses and thus able to be impregnated (*ātreyī*) was more severe than otherwise.

[50] *Āp.* I, 9, 25, 13. *Baudh.* I, 10, 19, 6. For example, the *Āpastamba* lists a crow, a chameleon, a peacock, a goose, a duck, a *bhāsa*, a frog, a mongoose, a musk-rat, and a dog. Some annotators interpret this as atonement for killing all of the animals on the list, while others call for atonement in the case of killing only one. Bühler's tr. of *Āpastamba*, p. 83, note. Pāṇḍeya's ed., p. 189. R. S. Sharma, *op. cit.*, pp. 123-24.

[51] *Baudhāyana* (I, 10, 19, 13) also allows for persons with sons belonging to the four varṇas to be legitimate witnesses.

[52] *DN.* III, p. 82.

tiya (kṣatriya), brāhmaṇa, vessa (vaiśya) and sudda (śūdra),[53] then adding to this general four-strata hierarchy, the inferior sub-varṇa classes of caṇḍāla and pukkusa.[54] Those who are obligated to engage in economic activities like production and trade are the vaiśya and śūdra varṇas. According to one source, "Vaiśyas are those who are known to follow the ways of sexual desire (marriage) and engage in the trades;" "śūdras are those who engage in hunting and menial labor."[55] In the passages introducing the brahmanic idea of varṇa, we also find, "the duty of vaiśyas is cultivation, that of śūdras is to serve", "vaiśyas earn their wealth through cultivation and animal raising; śūdras earn theirs by the sickle and carrying pole."[56]

The lower echelons of society, including slaves, wage workers (*kammakara*) and hirelings (*bhataka*), appear frequently in the Pāli sources. It is very likely that most of them belong to the śūdra varṇa. Although members of the upper three varṇas would by circumstance fall into poverty and be forced to work for hire or as slaves, it may be said that many of them still retained the varṇa in which they were born. (The servile occupations will be dealt with in more detail in the Appendix to this chapter.)

In their concrete descriptions of everyday life in ancient India, the Pāli sources, beginning with the *Jātakas*, do not make a clear distinction between vaiśyas and śūdras. That is to say, although brāhmaṇas and kṣatriyas are referred to by their varṇa names, the members of the two lower varṇas are described in terms of social reality, like family background, occupation, whether they are wealthy or poor, instead of the abstract social demarcation of varṇa. R. Fick has suggested that the *Jātakas,* except theoretical description about the varṇa system, do not provide any empirical proof that a fourth class called "śūdra" actually existed in ancient India, and he may be correct.[57] The kind of social discrimination against śūdras determined by the *Dharmasūtras* may not have been all that effective in reality; however, in contrast, the discrimination against caṇḍālas described in the Pāli sources do not contradict the orthodox brāhmaṇa idea of untouchability.

Much emphasis is put on such individual social attributes as birth (*jāti*), name (*nāma*), lineage (*gotta*), and family (*kula*). For example, we come across such expressions as "those who renounce the world have all kinds of names, lineages and births and come from all kinds of families."[58] and "people should mix with men of

[53] *VP.* III, pp. 184-85; IV, pp. 80, 177, 272.

[54] *SN.* I, pp. 102, 166. *AN.* I, p. 162; III, p. 214. *J.* III, pp. 194-95; IV, pp. 205, 303.

[55] *DN.* III, p. 95.

[56] *J.* VI, p. 201: *MN.* II, p. 180.

[57] R. Fick, *The Social Organisation in North-East India in Buddha's Time*, p. 314. Fick's notion has been opposed by Sharma (*op. cit.*, pp. 94-95); however, the former is in my opinion correct about the ambiguous nature of the actual conditions and functions of the śūdra varṇa in everyday life.

[58] *VP.* III, pp. 8, 177. cf. *DN.* III, p. 84.

the same or superior birth, lineage, wealth or amount of grain."[59] Varṇa is included in the category of birth; and while we do find such passages as "born with such and such a name, into such and such a lineage, and such and such a varṇa,"[60] they are not many.

Here are some concrete examples of distinctions made among birth, name and lineage.[61]

Noble birth (*ukkaṭṭhā-jāti*)	khattiya and brāhmaṇa
Ignoble birth (*hīnā-jāti*)	caṇḍāla, veṇa, nesāda, rathakāra, pukkusa
Noble name (*ukkaṭṭha-nāma*)	names related to buddha, *dhamma* and *saṅgha*
Ignoble name (*hīna-nāma*)	Avakaṇṇaka, Javakaṇṇaka, Dhaniṭṭhaka, Saviṭṭhaka, Kulavaḍḍhaka
Noble lineage (*ukkaṭṭha-gotta*)	Gotama, Moggallāna, Kaccāyana, Vāsiṭṭha
Ignoble lineage (*hīna-gotta*)	Kosiyagotta, Bhāradvājagotta
High family (*ucca-kula*)[62]	wealthy khattiya family, wealthy brāhmaṇa family, wealthy *gahapati* family
Despised family (*nīca-kula*)	caṇḍāla family, nesāda family, veṇa family, rathakāra family, pukkusa family

What we see here are distinctions based on birth, name, family, etc. being made between the two extremes of the social elite (including the wealthy urban class among vaiśyas called *gahapati*) and the social outcast; the majority of vaiśyas and almost all of śūdras, i.e. those who made up the great bulk of society, not being so distinguished or classified.

What we can conclude from this is that although the four-varṇa system was adopted in the middle and lower Ganga basin (centered around Magadha), the two lower varṇas of vaiśya and śūdra by no means came to function as distinct social classes, and the varṇa consciousness that had existed between the two (especially among vaiśyas) in orthodox Vedic society definitely grew weaker. The phenomenon was looked upon by orthodox brāhmaṇas as indicating that Magadha and its environs had become defiled by disturbances in the varṇa order.[63] From orthodox eyes, the whole region was viewed as populated mostly by śūdra-like people.

In any case, it seems that in the middle and lower reaches of the Ganga during the formation period of Buddhism (when early scripture was first compiled), many of the *Dharmasūtra* provisions concerning śūdra discrimination were not put into effect. One work gives a more realistic view of what was going on at the time

[59] *J.* I, p. 441.
[60] *AN.* I, p. 164. *MN.* I, pp. 22, 117, etc.
[61] *VP.* IV, 6.
[62] *SN.* I, pp. 93-95. *AN.* I, p. 107; II, pp. 85-86; III, 385-87. *MN.* II, pp. 152, 183-84; III, p. 169.
[63] For example, *Baudh.* I, 1, 2, 13.

in the region, stating,

> Anyone, even a śūdra, if he has plenty of property, grain, silver and gold...kṣatriyas, brāhmaṇas and vaiśyas alike will rise before him and retire after him, will be the first to do whatever their works may be, do and speak what they can to please him...[64]

It would not be long before the Nanda and Maurya Dynasties, looked upon by orthodox brāhmaṇas as tainted by śūdra blood, would rise up and prosper. The later works of orthodox brāhmaṇas would blame the Nanda Dynasty for causing the downfall of all kṣatriyas, therefore preventing the rise of any further legitimate kṣatriya kingdoms.

3. Śūdras Appearing in the *Arthaśāstra*

The image of the śūdra varṇa that appears in the *Arthaśāstra*, which is said to have been authored by Kauṭilya, a chancellor of the Mauryan Dynasty, falls somewhere between the *Dharmasūtras* and early Buddhist literature. That is to say, while taking up the strict orthodox brāhmaṇa provisions regarding śūdra discrimination and segregation, the work also depicts śūdras as the lower class masses engaged in the occupations of agriculture, animal raising and commerce. Specifically, concerning the obligations of the śūdra varṇa, the *Arthaśāstra* (I, 3, 8) states, "service to *dvijas,* engaging in their economic calling (*vārttā*), professions of artisan and actor (*kāru-kuśīlava-karma*)."

The duties of śūdras are similar to the *Dharmasūtra* determinations, with the exception of "*vārttā*," which the *Arthaśāstra* defines as agriculture, animal husbandry and commerce (I, 4, 1), thus indicating that by the time of the Mauryan Dynasty, the distinction between vaiśyas and śūdras had become very vague in the everyday life of the region.

How śūdras were transformed into cultivators is implied by the following passage (II, 1, 1-2&8).

> The king should move people from foreign lands or shift any excess population in his own country into land that had been formerly settled or land that has yet to be settled for the purpose of colonization. The colonized villages should be mainly made up of śūdra cultivators (*śūdrakarṣaka*) in units of between 100 and 500 families (*kula*) separated from one another by a distance of 1 or 2 *krośas* and mutually protecting each other... Reclaimed land should

[64] *MN.* II, p. 85.

be lent to taxpaying cultivators for one generation...

The phrase *śūdrakarṣaka* has been interpreted by R. S. Sharma as meaning "śūdras and cultivators" and thus indicating that "śūdras as slaves, artisans and agricultural laborers" in addition to "vaiśya cultivators who were given temporary landownership" were being moved for the purpose of land reclamation.[65] However, it is my opinion that the passage is a straight forward advice by the author of the *Arthaśāstra* to encourage kings to employ their śūdra masses in the task of land reclamation.

The *Arthaśāstra* also has a passage (IX, 2, 24) that states,

> [Of the four varṇa military divisions] the kṣatriya division which is the most experienced in the use of arms is better; or the vaiśya or śūdra division [is better] when possessed of great strength.

The content of this passage differs from both the *Dharmasūtras*, which forbid śūdras from carrying weapons, and what Megasthenes wrote about cultivators, herders or artisans not participating in the military.[66]

Concerning the provisions of inheritance, what first born males were especially entitled to inherit included goats used in sacrificial ceremonies in the case of brāhmaṇa families, horses in the case of kṣatriya families, cows in the case of vaiśya families and sheep in the case of śūdra families (III, 6, 1), showing that śūdras were allowed to own the necessities of everyday life.[67] The *Arthaśāstra* also suggests that when planning and building capital cities, a residential area for brāhmaṇas be erected to the north of the palace, one for kṣatriyas to the east, one for vaiśyas to the south and one for śūdras to the west (II, 4, 6-15); however, it is doubtful whether any city was ever built according to such specifications for segregated neighborhoods.

The rules about marriage (III, 7) between varṇas are the same as in the *Dharmasūtras* (See Section 1-C to this chapter). Children born between different varṇas were sometimes considered to be equal to śūdras, but among such mulattoes caṇḍālas were considered inferior to śūdras (III, 7, 36-37). The amount of inheritance entitled to sons born between śūdra women and men of higher varṇas was lower than otherwise.[68]

[65] R. S. Sharma, *op. cit.*, pp. 161-62.

[66] Megasthenes Fragments (McCrindle tr.), I, XXXII, XXXIII.

[67] *Baudhāyana* (II, 2, 3, 9) prescribes a cow, a horse, a goat and a sheep according to the varṇa order. The *Manu-smṛti* (IX, 157) does not recognize primogeniture among śūdras and calls for property to be distributed equally among all sons.

[68] III, 6, 17-18. In the case of a single son born to a family with two wives of different varṇas, the son was bound to inherit the total wealth and support his close kin; however, in the case of a son born between a brāhmaṇa husband and his śūdra wife, the son was entitled to only one-third of his father's wealth, the remaining two-thirds going to close kin for holding ancestor worship ceremonies, since the śūdra wife's son could not attend such rituals (III, 6, 21-22).

Concerning crimes committed by śūdras, the *Arthaśāstra* prescribes punishments somewhat more lenient than what the *Dharmasūtras* call for; one example being the punishment for slander, which was a fine rather than corporal punishment (III, 18, 7). Also brāhmaṇas were considered to be guilty of a crime for slandering śūdras and were to be fined, of course not much.

Although śūdras were objects of discrimination by the rest of varṇa society, they were still considered to be an important and integral part of that society. For example,

> With the exception of becoming a slave in order to feed oneself (*udaradāsa*), anyone selling or pawning a non-adult *ārya* (aged under 16) will be fined 12 *paṇas* for a kinsman in the case of a śūdra, twice that in the case of a vaiśya, three times in the case of a kṣatriya, and four times in the case of a brāhmaṇa (III, 13, 1).

In this provision śūdras are treated as *āryas* (free people) as opposed to *dāsas* (slaves). As indicated by heavy penalties for śūdras who attempt to impersonate brāhmaṇas,[69] the *Arthaśāstra* opposed social mobility within varṇa society. However, against the orthodox brāhmaṇa view that śūdras were to be excluded from *dvija* society, the *Arthaśāstra* inclines to the viewpoint that śūdras should be accepted as bona-fide members of "varṇa society."

One work describing what was happening in Indian society at the time the basic *Arthaśāstra* was compiled is the *Indika* of Megasthenes, a Greek envoy to the court of King Candragupta during the early Mauryan period. According to this work, there were seven different caste-like classes (*genos, meros*) in existence at the time, and Indians engaged only in the occupations of their indigenous classes, inter-class marriage being forbidden.[70] The seven classes consisted of 1) philosophers, 2) cultivators, 3) herders and hunters, 4) artisans and merchants, 5) warriors, 6) overseers, and 7) advisors and councilors. Of these, 3) being made up of vaiśya herders and śūdra hunters (including mulattoes), and 4) consisted of vaiśya merchants and śūdra artisans. Megathenes' description jibes well with the ambiguous distinction made by the earliest Buddhist sources between the two lower varṇas and the existence of a gap between theory and practice within the varṇa system itself.

[69] Blindness by means of poisonus collyrium or a fine of 800 *paṇas* (IV, 10, 13).

[70] Megasthenes Fragments, I, XXXII, XXXIII, XXXVI.

4. Śūdras as Seen in the *Manu-smṛti* and Later Works of Hindu Law

The *Manu-smṛti* is a comprehensive work of Hindu law that recapitulates the theory of the varṇa system developed in the *Dharmasūtras*. It also adds even more substance to the principles of śūdra discrimination and segregation found in the *Dharmasūtras*. Here are some examples.

To begin with, the obligation of śūdras to serve brāhmaṇas is clearly emphasized to the extent of arguing that śūdras were created for that purpose. Service to kṣatriyas and vaiśyas is considered to be merely a secondary means of livelihood for śūdras.

> Whether purchased [as a slave] or not, śūdras are required to render servile work, because they were created by Svayambhū for the purpose of serving brāhmaṇas (VIII, 413).
> Serving brāhmaṇas only is said to be a śūdra's highest form of labor. Other work will earn them no merit (X, 123).
> If such a śūdra [who cannot serve brāhmaṇas] tries to earn a living, he should serve kṣatriyas or he may also seek to maintain himself by attending a wealthy vaiśya (X, 121).

We have already seen in Section 1 that the *Dharmasūtras* recognized that a certain amount of wealth could be accumulated by śūdras. Similar provisions appear in the *Manu-smṛti*, but there are also the following two: one that seems to deny śūdra-owned property, the other suggesting the existence of śūdras owning slaves.

> A śūdra must not accumulate wealth, even if he is able to. This is because a wealthy śūdra is bound to cause brāhmaṇas trouble (X, 129).
> A son born between a śūdra and a female slave or a female slave of [his] slave (his slave's wife?), if recognized [by his father], is entitled to a part [of the inheritance]. This is in accordance with established law (IX, 179).

Next, here are two provisions concerning śūdra segregation.

> One must neither give advice to a śūdra nor give him leftovers or offerings to the gods. One must not teach a śūdra the *dharma* nor impose [upon him] a penance (IV, 80).
> Any śūdra who is so arrogant as to attempt to explain the *dharma* to brāhmaṇas should have his mouth and ears filled with boiling oil by the king (VIII, 272).

As we have seen many times in previous chapters, despite issuing such extreme restrictions, the *Manu-smṛti* also provides temporary, exceptional loopholes

to compromise the needs of everyday life.

It was the obligation of kings to mobilize the lower two varṇas in the interest of bringing both stability and prosperity to their kingdoms.

> [The king] is to promote commerce, money lending, agriculture and animal husbandry among his vaiśya subjects, and make his śūdra subjects perform servile labor for the *dvija* varṇas (VIII, 410).
> [The king] should do all that he can to make vaiśyas and śūdras perform their assigned tasks. This is because if either fails to carry out their respective duties, the world will fall into confusion (VIII, 418).

History records members of the śūdra varṇa establishing dynasties and seizing political power. Living under such "illegitimate" regimes or residing in kingdoms with large śūdra populations was looked upon as inappropriate for *dvijas*.

> It is forbidden [for any *dvija*] to reside in a country ruled by śūdra kings, surrounded by unrighteous people, controlled by heretics, and infested by inferiors (*antyaja*) (IV, 61).
> Kingdoms where a great many śūdras reside, those infested by atheists and those destitude of *dvijas* will suffer from famine and disease, and soon entirely perish (VIII, 22).

Śūdra discrimination and segregation are also recognized in principle by the works of Hindu law compiled after the *Manu-smṛti*; however, there are also provisions that reflect the social ambiguity that was arising between the vaiśya and śūdra varṇas in everyday life. Here are a few examples, beginning with occupation. In the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti*, orthodox brāhmaṇas had recognized śūdra participation in commerce.

> Śūdras [are obliged] to serve *dvijas*; but whenever such work cannot provide them with a living, they may engage in commerce. Or, while striving to serve the interests of *dvijas*, they are allowed to earn a living in the various arts (I, 120).

After the appearance of annotated works, clearer and clearer references were made to śūdras interfering in the occupations of vaiśyas. For example, the *Mitākṣarā*, a 12th century version annotated by Vijñāneśvara, comments on the above passage in the following way.

> The duties (*dharma*) of śūdras include serving *dvijas*, avoiding evil, supporting their wives [and children], cultivating, raising livestock, drayage, dealing

> in commodities, painting pictures, dancing, singing, and playing the flute, lute, and large and small drums, and so on.

The *Viṣṇu-smṛti* relates in the following way how the sources of national wealth rest in the work done by vaiśyas and śūdras.

> Kings should choose to live on dry flat plains, suitable for raising livestock, rich in grain and populated mainly by vaiśyas and śūdras (III, 4-5).

This provision stands out in stark contrast to the previous *Manu-smṛti* prohibition on *dvijas* residing in the country of large śūdra populations.

Turning to the ritual status of śūdras, let us look at a provision related to transporting corpses. Although the *Manu-smṛti* prohibits a śūdra from carrying the body of a dead brāhmaṇa out of fear of polluting it (V, 104), the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* states that śūdras are also in danger of pollution by *dvija* corpses they happen to accompany.

> Whenever a *dvija* accompanies a śūdra corpse, he must go to the river, bath and mutter the *Aghamarṣaṇa* three times. After leaving the water, he is to mutter the *Gāyatrī* 1008 times. When [a *dvija*] accompanies a *dvija* corpse, [he is to purify himself and mutter the *Gāyatrī*] 108 times only. Whenever a śūdra accompanies a *dvija* corpse, he must bath (XXII, 63-65).

The *Viṣṇu-smṛti* also forbids śūdras from eating the food of polluted *dvijas* and orders śūdras who violate the rule to purify themselves by bathing in a river (XXII, 17).

The above provisions from the later works of Hindu law display an attitude of compromise on the part of orthodox brāhmaṇas regarding the realities of everyday life facing them, particularly in their easing of restrictions pertaining to śūdra discrimination and segregation. In other words, the idea of "Aryan society" which excluded śūdras was in decline, while the idea of "Hindu society" which included them was moving to the forefront.

Concluding Remarks

The range of social stratification encompassing the term "śūdra" has gone through tremendous changes within the historical development of India. At first, during the late stages of tribal society, when the four-varṇa system first came into existence, the śūdra varṇa consisted of mainly indigenous peoples subjugated by Aryans who were to form the upper three varṇas. However, together with the transition from tribal to class society, the demarcation between vaiśyas and śūdras, who together

formed the productive forces in society, became more and more ambiguous. Particularly in eastern India (and also in Deccan), regions separated from the center of orthodox Brahmanism in the upper reaches of the Ganga, the distinction between the two lower varṇas became uncertain, and the greater part of the residents of those regions came to be considered as śūdras by orthodox brāhmaṇas.

Hsüan-chuang, a Chinese monk who made a pilgrimage to India during the early seventh century, wrote in his itinerary, "There are four classes of people in India who form distinct social groups: the brāhmaṇas, the kṣatriyas, the vaiśyas, i.e. merchants, and the śūdras, i.e. farmers."[71] Also, in his encyclopedia of India written during the early eleventh century, Al-Bīrūnī writes, "There is no great difference between vaiśyas and śūdras."[72] Furthermore, the annotation on *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* (12th century) cited here added to the duties required of śūdras the traditional activities of vaiśyas; that is, cultivation, raising livestock and commerce. The tendency to look upon vaiśyas as merchants and śūdras as cultivators became somewhat general by the seventh century and continued unchanged thereafter. This "śūdrazation" of the masses must have posed both an ideological and economic threat to brāhmaṇas who earned their living from performing religious services for *dvijas*. How brāhmaṇas responded to such a change can be summarized in the following manner.[73]

Despite the fact that śūdras had been excluded from Vedic ritual, they had their own rituals that were similar to those of the *dvija* varṇas. Moreover, the existence of the two Epics, the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana*, as well as the *Purāṇa* accounts of ancient traditions, provided support for śūdras in their religious endeavors. For example, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* argues that these Hindu scriptures had been written by deeply compassionate ancient sages for the happiness, salvation and enlightenment of all, including śūdras and women, who had been excluded from the Vedic religious world. However, śūdras were not allowed to read or listen to the Vedic *mantras* contained in them. There were two schools of thought concerning whether or not to allow śūdras to read the Epics and *Purāṇas*. The standpoint which is more influential is that śūdras must be satisfied with only hearing these works through the mouths of brāhmaṇas.

From the era of the *Dharmasūtras*, śūdras had been allowed to chant the *mantra* "*namaḥ*." Thereafter, particularly from the fifth century onward, a new collection of *mantras* based on the *Purāṇas* was composed by poets, mainly

[71] *Taishō*, LI, p. 877b. *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions,* tr. by Li Rongxi, Tokyo, 1996, pp. 58-59.

[72] E. C. Sachau ed. and tr., *Al-Beruni's India,* reprinted in India, New Delhi, 1983, pp. 100-02.

[73] The following discussion is based on P. V. Kane, *op. cit.,* Vol. I-2, pp. 893-96; Vol. II-1, pp. 155-59, 198-99; Vol. V-2, pp. 920-30, 1641-42.

brāhmaṇas, and gradually became even more important and popular than the Vedic *mantras*. It was these new *mantras* that śūdras chanted in their own religious ceremonies. According to P. V. Kane, the purpose behind brāhmaṇas composing these new *mantras* was to convert Buddhist śūdras to Hinduism.[74] There was one faction of brāhmaṇas who felt that śūdras be allowed to chant these *mantras* on their own, but were opposed by the majority, who believed that it was the task of brāhmaṇas to chant them at the śūdra ceremonies to which they were invited to officiate. It was in this way that brāhmaṇas were able to keep excluding śūdras from Vedic rituals, while at the same time participating in śūdra ceremonies as their priests. Putting it another way, in exchange for their religious compromise with the śūdra masses, brāhmaṇas were able to keep their traditional position and procure a means to earning a stable income.

On the other hand, with the formation of "Hindu society" (caste-Hindu society), there was an increase in the population of untouchables, who were excluded from the four varṇa framework. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the discrimination practiced against śūdras in ancient times would be partly transferred to the echelons of untouchables.

Appendix: An Overview of Slavery and Hired Labor*

Here let us look at the way in which the research to date has utilized the Buddhist sources, the *Arthaśāstra* and the *Dharmaśāstras,* in trying to explain slavery and hired labor in ancient India.

1. Slavery

Slaves in ancient India (*dāsa* [m.], *dāsī* [f.]) were generally looked upon as the property of their masters; however, they were not only considered to be possessions, but were also recognized as having human personalities to a certain extent, especially in the case of temporary slaves, such as indentured servants. Despite the existence of heavy restrictions, there were slaves who were entitled to own property and raise families, give testimony and conclude contracts, by virtue of either the generosity of their masters or the interests of free members.

[74] Kane, *op. cit.,* Vol. V-2, pp. 922, 925-26. Together with the spread of *bhakti* beliefs, śūdras and untouchables were allowed to chant *mantras* in which the names of Viṣṇu and Śiva were uttered: For example, *Śrī Rāma* jaya *Rāma jaya jaya Rāma* and the *Namaḥ Śivāya*, to which *dvijas* added *Oṃ*. Vol. II-1, p. 158.

* This Appendix is the summary of my articles "Slavery in Ancient India" and "Hired Laborers in Ancient India."

Slaves in ancient India were almost exclusively domestic slaves who were involved in working inside the homes of their masters to supplement family labor. The sources describe slaves as both members of families under the direction of household heads, as well as unfree members of society. The Buddhist sources and the *Arthaśāstra* depict what can be called "labor slaves," but they worked side by side with more numerous free wage laborers. That is to say, none of the sources imply that there were workplaces and enterprises that relied exclusively upon slave labor. Moreover, from the fact that the *Dharmaśāstras*, the latest sources of the three, do not contain any specific provisions or rules regarding such slaves, we can conclude that slavery did not develop into a separate mode of production in India. Rather, in the areas of craft production requiring specialized skills, the forms of production were already being organized along the lines of family and "guild" succession as early as the Buddha's lifetime; thus, the importance of slavery in the skilled trades can all but be ignored.

As we see in the Vedic literature, the earliest sources of slaves were conquered people and prisoners of war, and those sources continued to exist through the period covered by our three literary sources. Nevertheless, we find nothing in these three genres indicating that either the warriors or civilians of kingdoms that suffered defeats were taken as slaves on any large scale. Rock Edict XIII issued by King Aśoka says that a large number of subjects were moved (*apavāho*) out of the country of Kalinga; however, the *Arthaśāstra* suggests that this migration was for the purpose of forming land reclamation colonies. In general, it was the practice to use existing social institutions in defeated kingdoms in order not to foment rebellion or social chaos there. Furthermore, there is no indication of the practice of selling large amounts of war captives through slave markets; that is, the existence of a highly developed slave trade.

The Greek sources do relate that slaves were being traded in the ports of India, and there are many Indian sources mentioning the buying and selling of slaves, thus indicating the existence of slave markets in urban areas and port towns. However, these markets were probably supplying middle and upper class urban households with domestic labor rather than trafficking large amounts of slaves into rural areas or mining fields.

With the exception of inbred slaves, the major sources during the period in question were the poverty-stricken classes in both urban and rural areas, persons abducted and sold into slavery, war captives, imported slaves, and primitive peoples living on the periphery of agrarian society. That is to say, the real source of slavery was no doubt misfortune, both natural (flood, drought, etc.) and human (exploitation, plunder, etc.). In India's rural society where yearly climatic conditions determine productivity, during years of poor harvest, there must have been a constant stream of people willing to trade their freedom, both permanently and tem-

porarily, in order to survive. Even in colonial India, there are reports of slaves in rural society originating from local impoverished classes. The *Arthaśāstra* and the *Dharmaśāstras* make a distinction between life-long and temporary slaves. Of the latter, there are some who really do not deserve to be classified as such. On the other hand, among the poverty-stricken people who were forced into temporary slavery, there were probably those who eventually became permanent slaves.

Slaves in ancient India did not form any exclusive social and economic group. This is because in a local society so imbued with the idea of kinship, it would have been difficult for anyone who did become a slave to cut all ties with his kinsfolk and varṇa. This is one reason why the sources mentioning slaves sometimes touch upon the varṇas they belong to. But, how kin- and geographically-based communal groups dealt with the enslavement of their members is not very clear from the sources. It is certain that there were more śūdras than the other varṇas who were enslaved and that the traditional work done by śūdras overlapped with that done by slaves; however, in terms of social status, śūdras and slaves were put in altogether different categories.

The *Arthaśāstra* tells us that the state was interested and involved in slave-master relationships; and the *Dharmaśāstras* say that when problems between masters and their slaves arose, solutions could be reached through the local levels of state authority, if necessary. In the edicts of Aśoka, he exhorts his subjects to treat slaves and hirelings in the proper manner, together with such good deeds as obedience towards one's parents, giving alms out of respect to monks and brāhmaṇas, and respect for the elderly (Rock Edicts V, IX, XI, XIII; Pillar Edict VII). Such admonitions were attempts by the king who ruled over such a huge social, economic and political body, i.e. the Mauryan Empire, to bind and integrate his subjects. Although there was very little possibility of revolt among slaves that were mainly scattered about in households as domestic help, the Aśoka edicts show that slave-master relationships were considered important in maintaining stability on the local level and unification on the state level. While there are historians who point to the high level of liberality with which ancient Indian masters treated their slaves, many examples in the *Jātakas* show no apparent difference from the way domestic slaves were treated throughout the rest of the world.

As to the reasons why slavery did not develop into an important institution in India, the research to date has pointed to the incomplete breakdown of tribal society, undeveloped institutions of private property, the strongly self-sufficient nature of rural communities, undeveloped monetary systems and commodity production, the ease of cultivation and expansive forestland, the incompatibility of slavery to the intensive nature of paddy cultivation, the repulsiveness of buying and selling human beings in the Indian mind, the sufficient number of śūdras as the source of surplus production, and the existence of untouchables, a class regarded as inferior to slaves, to do defiling work.

Historians of the post-World War II era who have attempted to apply the principles of dialectic materialism to Indian history understand the ancient period as being characterized by the slave mode of production. For example, the history of the world published by the Soviet Academy of Science describes ancient Indian society as being marked by a class of "free" members (*ārya*) of the four varṇas and a class of "unfree" members (*dāsa*) of those varṇas, and while recognizing the failure of Indian society to develop its slave institutions to any high level, it concludes that "what determined the class structure of ancient India was the master-slave relationship."

Needless to say, slaves and slavery institutions appear at a certain stage in socioeconomic development; however, from the extant sources regarding ancient Indian society and economy, slavery cannot be said to have formed the main forces of production or have been the determinative factor in its social structure. In order to define ancient India as a "slave society," it would be necessary to make clear that the production relations between "free" members were secondary to the slave mode of production. Based on my own knowledge of the period, such a hypothesis would be difficult to prove. Even those historians who describe India as forming a feudal society in the course of its history have been reluctant to argue that previous to the feudal stage there existed a society based on slave-master production relations.

It is interesting to note that even after the British outlawed slavery in India in 1843, there were people throughout the country that remained in bondage resembling what is depicted as slavery in the ancient sources, and when litigation over slavery was filed, the British colonial courts would issue their judgements based on the rules concerning slaves in traditional Hindu law books.

2. Hired Labor

"Hired laborers" (*bhṛtaka*) indicate various workers different in both origin and character. In the cities, hirelings were employed in large public and private projects as well as domestic situations. In rural areas, wages were paid for cultivation, herding and odd jobs. Women were paid wages to cook and clean, as well as spin and weave. In the cities, workers were paid their wages in cash, clothing or food, while those in rural areas received grain, clothing or milk for their toil.

Wage labor in the cities was provided for a considerable part by *lumpen* types who had been alienated from the production process altogether; however, there were those who maintained contact with their village communities in the country, meaning that there were many migrant laborers working for wages. On the other hand, the majority of wage earners in rural areas had their own means of livelihood, however meager, within the community, but would also work at seasonal or temporary jobs for the more prosperous members of the community. One important question

that arises here is the relationship between wage workers and geographically based communities or kin- and professionally-based groups. All three types of sources we have utilized here contain nary a clue concerning how members of such communities became wage workers and what connections those working away of the cities maintained with their home villages. What we do know is that 1) in the villages of the most developed regions centered upon the Ganga basin, there were differences in the scale of land ownership leading to economic stratification in any community, with the wealthier strata employing the poorer strata, either as slaves or wage workers, in their large holdings of paddy and/or pastures, and 2) there were villagers who migrated to cities or other villages in search of work. There were also cases of village communities contracting outsiders for the special skills they possessed. People like untouchables and tribal people living on the periphery of villages would perform menial tasks for village households.

As to the kind of contracts concluded between workers and their employers, the *Arthaśāstra* and the *Dharmaśāstras* indicate a fair amount of sophistication, in that both the worker and employer would be held liable for breaching the agreement, giving us the impression that labor contracts were concluded on an equal quid pro quo basis, at least in the case of those involving urban-based skilled workers. On the other hand, menial domestic labor was probably contracted under conditions of subordination to employers or household heads, and it seems that such workers became attached to specific households generation after generation.

The sources also tend to mention worker-employer relationships together with slave-master relationships, and in the Buddhist sources and the *Arthaśāstra* it is difficult to discern any differences between the employment of unskilled hirelings and slaves, especially in the area of menial domestic tasks. While there are historians who conclude from provisions protecting wage workers in the *Arthaśāstra* and the *Dharmaśāstras* that labor conditions in ancient India were better than in other countries, the Buddhist sources tell a different story of insecurity and difficulty matching the tribulations of workers in any other ancient society.

Up to this point we have considered wage labor independent of the varṇa system; however, in ancient India society, which legitimized economic expropriation as the result of "birth," wage labor was no doubt tied up with the workings of the system. For example, in varṇa society, in which the brāhmaṇas were given every privilege imaginable and śūdras not given Aryan membership, such status discrimination must have influenced the terms of wage contracts concluded between members of different varṇas.

As we see in the *Jātakas*, the special skills enjoyed by artisans came to be handed down through their families, and such a tendency grew stronger and stronger throughout history. Therefore, contracts to employ such labor skills must have been extremely limited in comparison to those involving menial physical labor done by the poorer classes of society. In the latter case, workers were not only at a

purely economic disadvantage, but also plagued by other socio-cultural factors, such as varṇa-related discrimination and ideas about defiling occupations.

Finally, let us consider if there were any possible changes or developments that may have occurred in wage labor practices through the various epochs of ancient Indian history. As pointed out in the previous section, no significant changes in the nature or occurrence of slave labor can be noticed throughout the ancient period. On the other hand, given the more important role played by wage laborers in urban commerce and industry as well as in rural agrarian communities, changes in either its quantity or quality should have had important social consequences. According to our source materials examined, the Buddhist sources describe a flourishing private sector in the cities and the subordinate positions of wage laborers; the *Arthaśāstra* talks about large scale state-managed projects and almost equal worker-employer relationships in the private sector; and the *Dharmaśāstras* depict small scale rural production and relatively equal relationships between hired workers and employers. Needless to say, it is necessary to examine more sources before coming to any conclusions about the socioeconomic development of hired labor in ancient India.

Chapter X
CAṆḌĀLAS: THE UNTOUCHABLES OF ANCIENT INDIA

1. Origins of Untouchability

There were many people in ancient India who were engaged in inferior occupations and were looked upon as ritually defiled. Of these inferior classes, social rank was determined by the level of defilement associated with their occupations, with the most defiled among them being designated as "untouchable." Of the various people of sub-varṇa inferior social status appearing in the ancient source materials, there were many who were not determined as such on the basis of untouchability, but one group that was clearly delineated on that basis were the caṇḍālas, who will be the focus of the present chapter.

Let us first look at the origins of untouchability in India, while reviewing the research to date on the subject.[1] In Aryan society during the era of the *Ṛg Veda*, no ideas or institutions regarding untouchability seemed to exist, but the *Yajur Veda* and early *Upaniṣads* do mention non-Aryan native peoples with the tribal names of Caṇḍāla, Niṣāda and Paulkasa. Although these native peoples were looked down upon by Aryans as primitive savages, they were not necessarily regarded as ritually untouchable. It was in the *Dharmasūtras* (600-300 BC) and the earliest Buddhist sources (500 BC-) that items began to appear attributing innate untouchability to caṇḍālas. Here is one example from the *Āpastamba Dharmasūtra* (II, 1, 2, 8-9).

> Coming into physical contact with a caṇḍāla, conversing with or looking upon one will result in defilement, requiring acts of purification. In the case of physical contact, bathing of the whole body; conversation, speaking with a brāhmaṇa; observation, peering at the light [emanating from the sun, moon, or stars].

It was in this way that untouchability came into existence in India between the middle of the Later Vedic Age and the formation of Buddhism, i.e. 800-500 BC. The

[1] The research to date includes: N. K. Dutt, *Origin and Growth of Caste in India*, Vol. I. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. II-1. S. Chattopadhyaya, *Social Life in Ancient India*. R. S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India*, 2nd rev. ed. V. Jha, "Stages in the History of Untouchables," *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. II-1 (1975), pp. 14-31. Do., "Caṇḍāla and the Origin of Untouchability", *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol. XIII-1/2 (1986-87), pp. 1-36. S. Jaiswal, *Caste*, New Delhi, 1998.

Aryans who advanced deep into the Ganga basin during these centuries continued to mix with the native peoples both culturally and racially, went through a transition from animal raisers/occasional cultivators to cultivators/occasional herders, and began building small cities in the region. It was also a time when the idea of reincarnation first appeared, together with the avoidance of killing living beings, eating meat, etc. Animal slaughtering and such related occupations as leather-making came to be considered unclean; and those who engaged in them were looked down upon as socially inferior—ideas that could never have been imagined in pastural society. It is difficult to judge whether the idea of untouchability originated from non-Aryan native peoples or from some primitive Aryan concept of defilement. However, historically speaking, there is no doubt that the customs and practices related to untouchability were formed after the transition of Aryan society to agrarianism.

The period 800-500 BC also marked the emergence of brāhmaṇas to the top position in the varṇa social hierarchy as its elite priesthood. The fact that ideas about ritual untouchability arose during the same period can hardly be looked upon as coincidental, for it may be said that brāhmaṇas used rough, primitive ideas about the sacred and profane, pure and unclean as means to establish the holy character of their varṇa and its social superiority. Such an emphasis on purity demanded that the members of Aryan society, including brāhmaṇas, should avoid contact with unclean things, and resulted in those who performed tasks involving such things being regarded as ritually unclean as well, and being placed at the bottom echelons of that society. The level of impurity attributed to such inferior classes became an important element of stratification among them, with untouchables occupying the bottommost part of the bottom rung.

With the establishment in the upper and middle reaches of the Ganga of regional states that transcended the framework of tribal polities, their kṣatriya leaders took advantage of brāhmaṇa ideology to solidify their superior secular position, which politically fostered institutions regarding inferior classes, especially untouchability. That is to say, the existence of sub-varṇa inferior classes helped to assuage dissatisfaction among the productive forces of society—vaiśyas and śūdras—thus ensuring the maintenance and stability of the varṇa social order. Through the introduction of politically acknowledged sub-varṇa classes, vaiśyas and śūdras were able to solidify their positions within varṇa society and through their own discriminatory attitudes towards inferiors, they were provided with an important means of psychological gratification. R. S. Sharma has argued that one of the reasons why we find very little resistance to the ancient varṇa order on the part of śūdras was the existence of sub-varṇa classes inferior to them, thus easing the class conflict that existed between śūdras and *dvija* Aryans.[2] In other words, placing "unclean" people outside and below, the framework of varṇa society functioned to crystallize class

[2] R. S. Sharma, *op. cit.*, pp. 322-23.

relations within that society in the form of a ritually based stratified order. Membership in the sub-varṇa inferior classes was determined as follows.

First, there were the primitive tribal peoples living on the periphery of Aryan (agrarian) society. They maintained their own indigenous customs and languages and probably were originally occupied in hunting and gathering; but the geographical expansion of agrarian society put limits on such activities, forcing them to live on the periphery of that society mainly for economic reasons. The members of agrarian society recognized the indispensability of these people in the maintenance of the varṇa social order and put them to work in defiling occupations. However, not all indigenous peoples were relegated to positions of inferiority, for there were many who were able to secure positions within varṇa society and its agrarian culture. The name "caṇḍāla" seems to have originated from the name of one of the primitive tribes who were looked down upon by Aryans as culturally backward. After their untouchability was determined later on, people of no tribal relation, but with similar defiling occupations, became known as "caṇḍālas" as well.

Secondly, there were also people who had been members of agrarian society, but came to be considered defiled, either due to the occupations they engaged in for generations or their adherence to customs thought unclean by the members of varṇa society. There were also those who had been bona fide members of Aryan society, but who for some reason, like illegal marriage or criminal acts, had been exiled from their communities and forced to live in shame on the periphery of mainstream society with only their labor to keep them alive. However, this group of inferiors was secondary to the first in terms of both numbers and social importance.

One of the possible reasons why the members of varṇa society were so easily able to accept untouchability was that there was a large gap between agrarian/urban lifestyles of Aryans and the hunting/gathering customs of the primitive tribes living around them. Also, at the time of their incorporation into Aryan society, occupations were already tending to become hereditary, thus enabling the solidification of sub-varṇa inferior classes.

2. Caṇḍālas and Other Inferior People

The Buddhist sources describe the social situation of caṇḍālas in terms of "the lowest of men," "excluded from every caste (jāti) in existence," "despised by the members of every varṇa," "evil," "miserable," "defiled" and "pitiful." Anyone who comes into either physical or eye contact with them is bound to be ritually polluted; and the term "caṇḍāla" itself was often used as a term of derision.[3] The Buddhist sources frequently rank the members of society as "kṣatriyas, brāhmaṇas, vaiśyas,

[3] *Divyāv.*, p. 623. *AN.* III, p. 206. *J.* II, p. 6; IV, pp. 246, 376, 391-92. *Petavatthu*, p. 34.

śūdras, caṇḍālas, pukkusas," indicating that the last two were ranked below the four varṇas. They also count five types of such sub-varṇa inferior groups (caṇḍālas, nesādas, veṇas, rathakāras, pukkusas),[4] and mention them in contrast to the social elite—kṣatriyas, brāhmaṇas and *gahapatis*—as the dregs of society.[5] Occupationally, pukkusas were engaged in sanitation, veṇas in bamboo crafts, and rathakāras in woodworking and carriage-making; while only caṇḍālas were relegated to the status of untouchable.

The works of Hindu law define caṇḍālas as being an existence capable of defiling all the other members of society, being born from the union of a śūdra male and brāhmaṇa female (the worst *pratiloma* scenario), existing outside every *dharma* in existence, and being evil incarnate.[6] Caṇḍālas are mentioned together with funeral pyres, sacrificial pillars, corpses and graveyards as one of the most tabooed and fearful things in human existence.[7] They and similarly despised groups also appear along with such unclean animals as dogs, crows, carnivores and insects,[8] which kill living beings and feed on carrion and rotting substances.

The humans who are described in the company of caṇḍālas include first those in an unavoidable state of defilement, like menses or childbirth,[9] who must be temporarily separated from their communities out of fear of pollution, (then after purification, returned). Caṇḍālas possess the same possibility of defiling others, but on a permanent basis from generation to generation.

The second group we find matched with caṇḍālas consists of people who had been stripped of their social status due to some serious, unremedial infraction of Hindu law.[10] These *patitas* (outcasts), as they were called, were prohibited from coming into contact with the rest of society in any way, and if they did, they would be capable of causing defilement equal to that of untouchables.[11] It should be noted here that except for those *patitas* who were permanently expelled, most of them

[4] *SN.* I, pp. 102, 166. *AN.* I, p. 162; III, p. 214. *Vimānavatthu*, p. 58. *J.* III, p. 194; IV, pp. 205, 303.

[5] See p. 178 of this volume.

[6] *Gaut.* IV, 28. *Manu*, X, 12, 16, 26. *Yāj.* I, 93.

[7] *Gaut.* XIV, 30-31; XVI, 19. *Āp.* I, 3, 9, 14-16. *Baudh.* I, 5, 9, 5; I, 5, 11, 36. *Vās.* XIII, 11. *Manu*, V, 85. *Viṣ.* XXII, 69.

[8] *Gaut.* XIV, 30-32; XV, 24. *Āp.* II, 4, 9, 5. *Baudh.* I, 5, 11, 36. *Vās.* XI, 9; XXIII, 33. *Manu*, III, 92; V, 131. *Yāj.* I, 103. *Viṣ.* XXIII, 41, 50.

[9] *Gaut.* XIV, 30; XXIII, 34. *Manu*, III, 239; V, 85. *Viṣ.* XXII, 69, etc.

[10] *Gaut.* XIV, 30; XV, 24. *Āp.* I, 3, 9, 9&15. *Baudh.* I, 5, 9, 7; I, 5, 11, 36. *Vās.* XI, 9; XX, 17; XXIII, 33-34. *Manu*, III, 92; IV, 79; V, 85.

[11] However, there are provisions stating that children are obliged to take care of their outcast mothers (*Āp.* I, 10, 28, 9. *Baudh.* II, 2, 3, 42. *Vās.* XIII, 47) and parents (*Gaut.* XXI, 15), and another that required outcast women to be provided with food, clothing and shelter (*Yāj.* III, 297).

could regain their Aryan membership after completing expiation. One other difference was that caṇḍālas were organized socially along traditional kinship lines, of which *patitas* had been deprived.

The third group that appears in conjunction with caṇḍālas are slaves (*dāsa*).[12] In contrast to caṇḍālas, slaves in general had nothing to do with ritual or religious impurity. The comparison seems to be economic in character, in that both groups were stripped of legal status and relegated to the same socioeconomic position. However, in terms of living conditions, there is almost nothing in common between slaves, who were engaged in domestic service to households of all varṇas, and caṇḍālas, who would not be allowed even to enter their houses.

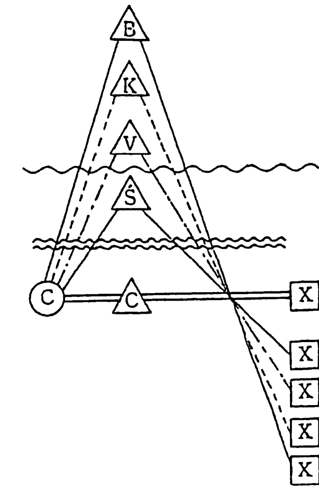
The fourth group appearing with caṇḍālas is śūdras, the lowest in the varṇa system and the object of discrimination from *dvijas*. Despite being forbidden from learning the Veda and attending Vedic ceremonies, śūdras had the right to participate socially and economically in the varṇa society, unlike caṇḍālas, whose position was lower than śūdras. On the other hand, Pāṇini and Patañjali both consider the inferior classes, including caṇḍālas, as within the scope of the śūdra varṇa.[13] As for the *Manu-smṛti*, it states that no fifth varṇa exists and that the duties of mulatto children born from illicit marriages between varṇas are the same as children of śūdras (X, 4, 41). Moreover, the works of Hindu law recognize that many inferiors, including caṇḍālas, are of mixed śūdra blood. From such statements, P. V. Kane and R. S. Sharma assume that caṇḍālas originally belonged to the śūdra varṇa.[14] Indeed, it is quite possible to assume that at some time in the historical process, caṇḍālas and others had been put into a śūdra category or that they were looked upon as "inferior śūdras." In any case, it is clear that the works of Hindu law make a distinction between śūdras in general and caṇḍālas. Turning to the *Arthaśāstra*, it states that mulattoes born between different varṇas should be treated in the same way as śūdras; although adding "caṇḍālas are not of that category" (III, 7, 37), that is, they are clearly inferior to śūdras.[15]

[12] *Manu*, VIII, 66. *Nār*. XV–XVI, 11. *Kāty*. 433, 783.
[13] V. S. Agrawala, *India as Known to Pāṇini*, Lucknow, 1953, pp. 77-79. P. V. Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 168. R. S. Sharma, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-39, 229.
[14] P. V. Kane, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-68. R. S. Sharma, *op. cit.*, p. 229.
[15] All the sub-varṇa inferior groups, including caṇḍālas, were in theory looked upon as unclean mulattoes based on the ideas of *anuloma* and *pratiloma* marriage. Medhātithi's and Kullūka's commentaries on the *Manu-smṛti* (X, 13) state that of *pratiloma* mulattoes only caṇḍālas are untouchable, and any contact with other *pratiloma* mulattoes does not require bathing as purification. However, those called "śvapacas" seem to have been regarded as untouchables (*Manu*, X, 51-56). And there are cases in which inferiors capable of polluting

The fifth group appearing in the same breathe as caṇḍālas were *mlecchas*,[16] who were non-Aryan foreigners living according to their own customs. Viewing *mlecchas* as unclean probably accompanied a conceptualization of untouchability; but, with rare exceptions, Aryans had no contact with *mlecchas* in everyday life. In historical times, many groups of migrants from foreign countries entered India and were gradually enculturated into Aryan society and in the course of time became varṇa members.

The general terms used in the works of Hindu law for the sub-varṇa despised groups as a whole were 1) *antya, antyaja* (of lowest existence/birth), *antyāvasāyin* (those living at the bottom), 2) *bāhya, bahirvāsin* (outsiders), and 3) *apapātra* (vessels used by them must be thrown away). There is also the term which means "untouchable (*aspṛśya*)," but it only came into use in the later *Dharmaśāstras* (e.g., *Viṣṇu*, V, 104, XLIV, 9; *Kātyāyana*, 433, 783).

Offspring of the *Pratiloma* Marriage with Caṇḍāla Blood



Key: ○ Father; △ Mother; □ Child

3. Caṇḍāla Daily Life

A. Birth and Other Origins

In ancient India, where the ideas of *karma* and *saṃsāra* formed an important mental set among the people, to be born as a caṇḍāla was looked upon as the result of having led a life of sin in one's past existence. For example, in the works of Hindu

varṇa members are referred to with the common nouns *antya* or *antyaja*, so untouchable kinship groups were not necessarily limited to caṇḍālas. Rather, the sub-varṇa inferior classes should probably be thought of as composed of a complex series of kinship groups ranked in comparison with the absolute criterium of defilement characterizing the lowest, untouchable strata of caṇḍālas. See P. V. Kane, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-73. Furthermore, there was the possibility of persons becoming even more inferior to caṇḍālas by virtue of being born between a caṇḍāla and a woman of superior ranking, based on the theory of *pratiloma* marriage (Kullūka, on Manu, X, 30-31, 39), as indicated by the above figure.
[16] *Viṣ*. XXII, 76. *Kāty*. 433, 783, 943.

law, it is written that those who are reborn as caṇḍālas had in their previous lives killed a brāhmaṇa, stolen gold from a brāhmaṇa, begged for alms from a śūdra to acquire ceremonial goods, drunk *surā* liquor, had not sought expiation for sins that would result in exile from one's varṇa (*patita* status), or had contemplated stealing, committing evil acts, or bearing false thinking.[17]

Various works say that sub-varṇa inferior groups should marry among themselves,[18] and it is without doubt that almost all of caṇḍālas were born into kinship groups (*caṇḍālajāti*).[19] On the other hand, there were also members of varṇa society who had been excluded from it as caṇḍālas. For example, there is an account in the Buddhist sources that an enraged mob stripped an evil king of his clothing, made him caṇḍāla, and expelled him to the caṇḍāla quarter.[20] The *Manu-smṛti* (XI, 176) states, "Any brāhmaṇa who unknowingly has intercourse with a caṇḍāla or *antya* woman, eats food [prepared by such persons] or receives alms [from them] becomes a *patita*. He who knowingly [commits such acts] becomes their equal."[21] Children born from illicit marriages were sometimes subject to social condemnation and were treated like members of inferior groups including caṇḍālas.[22]

B. Living Conditions

Caṇḍālas were segregated from urban and village communities and forced to live together outside those settlements. The Buddhist sources mention caṇḍāla villages (*caṇḍālagāma*, *caṇḍālagāmaka*)[23] and also caṇḍāla settlements (*caṇḍālavāṭaka*) on the outskirts of cities.[24] The works of Hindu law determine that caṇḍāla settlements

[17] *Āp.* II, 1, 2, 6. *Manu*, XII, 55. *Yāj.* I, 127; III, 131-34, 207, 217, 225. *Viṣ.* XLIV, 9.
[18] *Divyāv.*, p. 623. *Arth.* III, 7, 36. *Manu*, X, 53. *Viṣ.* XVI, 15.
[19] *VP.* IV, p. 6.
[20] *caṇḍālaṃ katvā caṇḍālavāṭakaṃ pahiṇiṃsu* (*J.* VI, p. 156).
[21] See also *Baudh.* II, 2, 4, 14. *Viṣ.* LIII, 5-6.
[22] Children of unmarried women, those born between men and women of the same *gorta*, and children of those who had quit their lives of renunciation were sometimes considered to fall within the caṇḍāla category (P. V. Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 81). Contemptible behavior was likened to that of caṇḍālas. One manuscript of the *Vāsiṣṭha* (Führer's ed., p. 21, fn 23) divides caṇḍālas into those who were born as such and those who became so as the result of atheism, slander, lack of gratitude or constant anger.
[23] *J.* IV, pp. 200, 376-77, 390. According to one story in the *Divyāvadāna* (XXXIII), there was a caṇḍāla town (*caṇḍālakulanagara*) on the bank of the Ganga, where the king of the Mātaṅgas (caṇḍālas) lived with several thousand of his subjects. This is the only source that mentions a caṇḍāla settlement of such large scale. The story also contains exaggerations to show the greatness of the king, who had been the Buddha in his previous life. See also Chapter XI, pp. 229-32.
[24] See note 20 of this chapter.

be located outside of villages, and that their residents not be allowed to enter cities and villages at night.[25] The *Arthaśāstra* mentions wells to be used exclusively by caṇḍālas (I, 14, 10) and urges that when cities are constructed, settlements for caṇḍālas and heretics be located on the edges of cemeteries (II, 4, 23). Such residential segregation seems to have aided in preserving the indigenous language of caṇḍālas (*caṇḍālabhāsā*), which according to one Buddhist source could be clearly distinguished from other dialects.[26]

The Buddhist sources describe the material lives of caṇḍālas and other despised classes as of the lowest standard in society, and due to unsanitary, impoverished conditions, there were many physically disabled and diseased people among them.[27] The *Manu-smṛti* has provisions urging that caṇḍālas should be allowed to own only dogs and donkeys, wear clothing taken from corpses, eat from broken plates, use body accessories made only from iron, and wander from place to place (X, 51-56). There is also a provision that caṇḍālas don a special mark established by royal edict while commuting to their workplaces during the daytime.[28] One Buddhist source also states that caṇḍālas could be identified at a glance.[29] The *Kātyāyana-smṛti* uses the term "*gulma*" to describe groups of sub-varṇa inferiors, like caṇḍālas, who lived segregated from varṇa society (681). It also recognizes the existence of customs and practices unique to those groups; and in the settlement of affairs among them, kings are to give priority to such customs (40, 433, 943).

C. Occupations

Despite being excluded ritually and socially from varṇa society, caṇḍālas were connected to that society in various ways out of the necessity to earn a living, while the members of varṇa society were successful in ridding themselves of works related to the most tabooed aspects of life by making caṇḍālas do them. In the Buddhist

[25] *Manu*, X, 51, 54. *Viṣ.* XVI, 14.
[26] *J.* IV, pp. 391-92.
[27] *SN.* I, pp. 93-95. *AN.* I, p. 107; II, pp. 85-86; III, pp. 385-86. *MN.* III, pp. 169-70.
[28] *Manu*, X, 55. There are a number of explanations concerning what this mark looked like: 1) a club, an axe or hatchet used in executions to be carried on the shoulder, 2) carrying a staff of some kind, 3) an iron or peacock feather body accessory, and 4) a brand on the forehead or other part of the body (Bühler's tr., p. 415, note 55. G. Jha, *Manu-Smṛti Notes*, Part II, University of Calcutta, 1924, p. 780). Their occupations include some kinds of trading, self-employment, working for the king and visiting local festivals (Medhātithi).
[29] One king who was demoted to the status of caṇḍāla was made to wear brownish colored clothing and a hood of yellow (*J.* VI, p. 156), while another story relates that caṇḍālas wore red undergarments tied with a waistband, over which they wore dirty, tattered clothing, and carried earthenware bowls (*J.* IV, p. 379).

sources we find caṇḍālas working as executioners, undertakers and assassins,[30] while the works of Hindu law and the *Arthaśāstra* describe them as performers of corporal punishment (including the death penalty) and carriers of corpses.[31] Also in addition to duties as public executioners, we find them employed as guardsmen in villages and towns, as well as agents in the pursuit of criminals.[32]

Even after they came into contact with varṇa society, caṇḍālas continued to practice their indigenous customs to a certain extent. For example, one Buddhist source mentions them employed in their traditional occupations of hunting and arrow making,[33] while the *Arthaśāstra* suggests that caṇḍālas be employed in guarding forest areas (II, 1, 6). The works of Hindu law prescribes that the flesh of an animal killed by caṇḍālas is "pure,"[34] raising the possibility that caṇḍāla's hunting and gathering activities may have been a source of trade with varṇa society in addition to satisfying their own needs.[35] One account describes caṇḍālas making chairs and stools,[36] indicating the production of wooden goods by these forest dwellers.

Other occupations that caṇḍālas were engaged in included sanitation and earthwork. They and their fellow groups would be called to rid towns and villages of dead animals and other unsanitary conditions. While it cannot be said that leather tanning was an occupation unique to caṇḍālas, it would be safe to assume that the dead animals they disposed of were used in making leather goods. There is a Buddhist story in which a caṇḍāla man and his wife were employed in repairing a palace; their son was also engaged in the same work.[37] Here we discover that caṇḍāla women were also involved in sanitation and earthwork. The Buddhist

[30] *Taishō*, IV, pp. 298b, 352b, 495b-c. The note to one *Jātaka* says that caṇḍālas were employed to carry corpses (*chava-chaḍḍaka*). *J.* III, p. 195.
[31] *Manu*, X, 55-56. *Viṣ.* XVI, 11. *Arth.* III, 3, 28; IV, 7, 25-26.
[32] *J.* III, p. 30. *Nār.* XIV, 26.
[33] *Taishō*, IV, p. 304a. One section of the *Mahābhārata* (XII, 139, 27-30) expresses both the fear and scorn that members of agrarian society felt toward forest people in a description of a hamlet populated by brutal śvapacas (caṇḍālas) who slaughter living things for a livelihood. "There are shards of pottery scattered around; the hides of dogs cover the gound here and there; and the bones and skulls of wild boars and donkeys lie strewn about. There are piles of clothing stripped from the dead, used flowers are the decorations, and sloughs of snakes in the form of wreaths welcome visitors to each hut. Screeching chickens and baying donkeys fill the air in competition with the ear shattering screams of the villagers. There are shrines, with banners bearing emblems of owl wings and iron bell decorations. Packs of dogs congregate here and there."
[34] *Manu*, V, 131. *Yāj.* I, 192. *Viṣ.* XXIII, 50.
[35] *J.* IV, p. 201. The Chinese monk Fa-hsien mentions in his fifth century itinerary that caṇḍālas were sellers of meat. See also pp. 206-07 of this chapter.
[36] *Apadāna*, II, p. 377.
[37] *J.* V, p. 429.

sources also tell of caṇḍālas trained in the acrobatic art of *dhopana*, which they performed before public audiences,[38] and of caṇḍāla women versed in the art of magic.[39] One account tells of a caṇḍāla using incantations to make fruit grow out of season.[40]

4. Caṇḍālas and the Members of Varṇa Society

A. The Buddhist Sources

In efforts to obey sacred law in preserving their ritual purity, the members of varṇa society, especially brāhmaṇas, took great pains to avoid contact with sub-varṇa groups. In the Buddhist sources, we find such accounts as a daughter of a wealthy family (*seṭṭhi*) and also a daughter of a *purohita* washing their eyes with toilet water after seeing a caṇḍāla on the street, a brāhmaṇa fearing pollution from being downwind of a caṇḍāla, and another brāhmaṇa dying of shame after being too hungry to resist eating food leftover by a caṇḍāla.[41] Brāhmaṇas who had drunk a beverage leftover by a caṇḍāla were to be stripped of their varṇa status.[42] Those who did come into contact with caṇḍālas would be too embarrassed to talk about it; and caṇḍālas themselves, understanding the situation, would take pains to keep out of view of the members of varṇa society.[43] Those caṇḍālas who did not know their place would be severely dealt with by varṇa society. For example, the punishment for a caṇḍāla who associated with a royal princess was execution after a period of hard labor; another caṇḍāla, who appeared in public view was attacked and beaten.[44] Therefore, it was necessary for caṇḍālas with ambitious goals to go to a far away place and disguise their true social origins (*jāti*).[45]

On the other hand, it was virtually impossible to avoid all contact with caṇḍālas, since they were indispensable in performing inferior, defiling work tasks. In the *Jātakas* we find tales about a brāhmaṇa traveling together with a caṇḍāla, and a king conversing with one.[46] However, such events are probably more in the realm of fiction than reality. Although members of the social elite (brāhmaṇas, aristocrats and wealthy vaiśyas) would be able to live a lifetime almost without coming into

[38] *J.* IV, p. 390. *DN.* I, pp. 6, 65.
[39] *Taishō*, L, p. 139a-b. *Divyāv.*, pp. 397-98, 612.
[40] *J.* IV, p. 200.
[41] *J.* IV, pp. 376, 390-91; *J.* III, pp. 232-33; *J.* II, pp. 82-84. See also pp. 226-29 of this volume.
[42] *J.* IV, p. 388.
[43] *J.* IV, pp. 202-03. There is the account of one caṇḍāla avoiding a procession of the daughter of a wealthy merchant by standing motionless by the side of road. *J.* IV, p. 376.
[44] *J.* V, p. 429; *J.* IV, pp. 376, 391.
[45] *J.* IV, p. 391.
[46] *J.* II, pp. 82-83; *J.* III, p. 30.

contact with a caṇḍāla, the common people would be sure to meet them on a daily basis.

The attitude shown toward caṇḍālas by the early Buddhist *saṅgha* was consistent in that if they held correct beliefs and lived moral lives, or renounced the world and turned to ascetism, they would receive in the same way as the members of varṇa society such rewards as heaven, rebirth into a higher varṇa, or enlightenment.[47] Several sources go as far as to argue that anyone of wisdom and virtue, even a caṇḍāla, was worthy of respect.[48] The early Buddhist *saṅgha* also proselytized among inferior classes and opened their doors to them; however, such actions should be viewed in the light of religious and moral conviction rather than any social movement for the purpose of eliminating social discrimination.

B. The Arthaśāstra

This source contains a good deal of information regarding slaves and hired laborers, including a section on how they should be treated; however, on the whole, references to caṇḍālas are few and far between. This imbalance may be due to the more important economic role played by the former, and the fact that the latter did not participate directly in activities related to the strengthening of the state.

Concerning the relationship between caṇḍālas and the members of varṇa society, the former, who were equated with *patitas* and those involved in inferior, defiling occupations, were forbidden from testifying in litigation other than that involving their own group (III, 11, 29). Members of despised sub-varṇa groups who caused damage to any *ārya* (those who belong to the four varṇas including śūdras) were to be punished severely. For example, any caṇḍāla who touched an *ārya* woman was to be fined 100 *paṇas* (III, 20, 16), any śvapāka (i.e. caṇḍāla-like despised people) who had sexual relations with an *ārya* woman was to be executed;[49] any member of a sub-varṇa group who struck a brāhmaṇa was to have the limb involved in the attack severed, while a fine was to be levied for threatening a brāhmaṇa, and in the case of mere touch, half of that fine was to be imposed.[50] On the other hand, among *āryas* who became sexually involved with śvapāka women, śūdras were to be relegated to the social position of śvapāka, while members of the other varṇas were to have the symbol of a headless torso branded on their foreheads and be exiled to a far away land (IV, 13, 34).

[47] *SN.* I, p. 166. *AN.* I, p. 162; III, p. 214. *Apadāna*, II, p. 377. *Vimānavatthu*, pp. 18-19. *J.* IV, p. 303; VI, p. 213.

[48] *Taishō*, IV, pp. 298b-299a, 303b-304a. *Divyāv.*, p. 618f. *J.* IV, p. 205.

[49] The woman was to have her ears and nose severed. IV, 13, 35.

[50] These punishments are the same as in the case of similar offenses committed by śūdras against brāhmaṇas (III, 19, 8-10). Such provisions contradict others, suggesting that they were inserted at a later time. R. P. Kangle, *The Kauṭilīya Arthaśāstra*, Pt. II, p. 288, fn. 8-10.

Any *antāvasāyin* (i.e. caṇḍālas, śvapākas, etc.) who defamed the character of a varṇa member would be fined 12 *paṇas* in the case of a brāhmaṇa, 9 in the case of a kṣatriya, 6 in the case of a vaiśya, and 3 in the case of a śūdra. Incidentally, these fines are far more lenient than comparable fines appearing in the works of Hindu law pertaining to śūdras. On the other hand, defamation of character committed by members of varṇa society against any *antāvasāyin* was subject to a fine of 2 *paṇas* (III, 18, 7). Finally, the fine (27 *paṇas*) to be levied against any caṇḍāla or forest dweller (*āraṇyacara*) found stealing or killing a domestic animal worth 25 *paṇas* or less was half that for the same crime committed by a member of varṇa society (IV, 10, 2).

C. The Works of Hindu Law

Here we find ideas concerning the despised classes held by brāhmaṇa intellectuals in their efforts to preserve varṇa society. Therefore, it is no wonder that there are so many provisions dealing with preserving ritual purity, including rules to prevent possible defilement which would occur through contact with inferiors. For example, when caṇḍālas and other despised beings observe Vedic activities, or are even in proximity to those activities, such events become meaningless and equivalent to conducting them near corpses or graveyards.[51]

In order to protect their own purity as the highest order in varṇa society, brāhmaṇas established very complicated purification and atonement rites for themselves, which of course included cases of contact with caṇḍālas.[52] There are many such provisions, but their content differs from source to source. Here are some representative examples.

The more minor cases of contact with caṇḍālas included not only physical contact, but also merely hearing their voices or looking upon them.[53] Upon touching persons who have touched caṇḍālas and other defiling beings, one becomes also impure. The *Vāsiṣṭha Dharmasūtra* states that in the case of contact with dogs, caṇḍālas and *patitas*, one should bath fully clothed, and upon hearing the voice of a caṇḍāla or *patita* while reciting the Veda, three days of silence and fasting, or the recitation of *Gāyatrī* at least a thousand times is required (XXIII, 33-35). The *Manu-smṛti* states that one should bath in the case of contact with a *divākīrti* (i.e. caṇḍāla), a menstruating woman, a *patita*, a woman who has recently given birth, a corpse, or one who has touched a corpse (V, 85),[54] while the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* calls for bathing in clean clothing for those who have touched caṇḍālas or other contami-

[51] *Gaut.* XV, 24; XVI, 19. *Āp.* I, 3, 9, 6-19; II, 7, 17, 20. *Baudh.* I, 11, 21, 15. *Vās.* XIII, 11; XXIII, 34. *Manu*, III, 239-42. *Yāj.* I, 148.

[52] *Gaut.* XX, 1. *Āp.* I, 7, 21, 17-18. *Baudh.* II, 2, 4, 14. *Manu*, XI, 176.

[53] See the purification rituals prescribed by the *Āpastamba* at the beginning of this chapter. Also see *Gaut.* XIV, 30. *Manu*, V, 85.

[54] See also *Gaut.* XIV, 30. *Baudh.* I, 5, 9, 5.

nating things (XXII, 69-71), and sipping water for those who have talked to caṇḍālas or *mleccha* barbarians (XXII, 76).[55] The later commentaries on Hindu law would go into more and more detail with such explanations as the shadow of a caṇḍāla is defiling and contact is forbidden with a caṇḍāla within the length of a cow's tail.[56]

Far more serious in terms of pollution and complexity of atonement are the cases of sexual relations with sub-varṇa despised women and accepting food from them. For example, the *Gautama Dharmasūtra* requires one year of *kṛcchra* penance in the case of intentional sexual relations and twelve days in the case of non-intentional acts (XXIII, 32-33).[57] The *Manu-smṛti* states that any twice-born man who spends one night with a *vṛṣala* (śūdra) woman must eat from an alms bowl and recite the *Gāyatrī* for three years;[58] and warns brāhmaṇas to be especially careful, stating that any one of their kind who unintentionally approaches a caṇḍāla or *antyaja* woman, eats her food, or receives alms from her will become a *patita*, while he who intentionally does so will assume the same status as her (XI, 176). The *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* states that sexual relations with an *antyaja* woman is as heinous a crime as intercourse with a friend's wife, an under-aged girl, one's sister, a woman of the same *gotra*, or his son's wife (III, 231); and living conjugally with an *antyaja* woman will result in being branded with a mark of disgrace and

[55] See also *Yāj.* III, 30.
[56] P. V. Kane, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-75.
[57] The *Baudhāyana* requires two years of banishment (*patita*) for any varṇa member who has sexual relations with an *apapātra* or a *patita* woman, etc. (II, 1, 2, 13-14), then requires the three forms of atonement, *kṛcchra*, *atikṛcchra*, and *cāndrāyaṇa*, for anyone philandering with caṇḍāla or other prohibited women (*agamyā*) (II, 2, 4, 12-13). The *Vāsiṣṭha* requires three months of *kṛcchra* penance for similar acts (XX, 16), and another provision requires in the case of sexual relations with a caṇḍāla woman a diet of only water for a month and chanting the *śuddhavatī* or participation in *aśvamedha-avabhṛtha*, i.e. the bath at the conclusion of a horse-sacrifice (XXIII, 39-41). The *kṛcchra* penance involved a diet of only morning meals for first three days, then only evening meals for the next three days, followed by only food obtained by not begging for the next three days, then fasting for the next three days. The *atikṛcchra* penance involved the same diet, but only one mouthful of food at each meal. *Cāndrāyaṇa* involved eating fourteen mouthfuls of food on the first day of the waned moon, then one less mouthful everyday after that until the first day of the new moon, on which fasting was required, followed by one more mouthful each day for the rest of the month. Of course, bathing three times a day was also required during the duration of the penance. *Baudh.* II, 1, 2, 38-45; III, 8, 1-31; IV, 5, 6-21. Also see P. V. Kane, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 130-38.
[58] *Manu*, XI, 179. Also see *Viṣ.* LIII, 9. Commentators disagree over whether a *vṛṣala* woman is a śūdra or caṇḍāla. Also *Manu*. (VIII, 373) requires double the fine for recidivists having sexual relations with a *vrātya* woman (wife of an uninitiated *dvija*, an unmarried adult woman, a prostitute, a woman serving more than one man, a degraded woman, etc.) or a caṇḍāla woman.

banished (II, 294).[59] According to the *Viṣṇu-smṛti*, knowingly having sexual relations with a caṇḍāla woman will result in demotion to her status, and in the case of ignorance, performance of the *cāndrāyaṇa* purification ritual twice is required (LIII, 5-6).[60] Regarding the eating of food received from a caṇḍāla or *patita*, the *Vāsiṣṭha Dharmasūtra* orders that after three months of *kṛcchra* penance, an initiation ceremony be enacted in abbreviated form (i.e. without headshaving, etc.) (XX, 17-18), while the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* calls for three days of fasting if the food was knowingly eaten (LI, 57).

As to the severe punishments meted out to inferior people who approached members of varṇa society, the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* prescribes death for any *antya* person who has sexual relations with an Aryan woman (II, 294) and a fine of 100 *paṇas* for those caṇḍālas who touched the highest of persons (*uttama*) (II, 234),[61] while the *Viṣṇu-smṛti* prescribes corporal punishment for any untouchable (*aspṛśya*) who intentionally comes into contact with touchables (*spṛśya*), i.e. members of the upper three *dvija* varṇas (V, 104).[62]

Despite such severe restrictions on contact between the two groups, the members of varṇa society were by and large unable to avoid contact with sub-varṇa inferior groups on a daily basis, a fact of life that the writers of the works of Hindu law were fully aware of, resulting in a set of exceptions designed to help varṇa members overcome such difficulties. For example, the *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* reasons that seats, benches, vehicles, boats, streets and grass are all purified by the wind in case of contact with caṇḍālas or *patitas* (I, 5, 9, 7); and the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti* prescribes that when mud and water in the streets come into contact with unclean persons (*antya*), dogs or crows, the wind is sufficient to purify them, and that houses made out of fired brick do the same.[63] Furthermore, the *Manu-smṛti* and other works attempt to protect food from defilement by stating that the venison from an animal killed by a caṇḍāla, dog, or carnivore is clean.[64] The *Manu* also cites the example of the sage Viśvāmitra fighting off starvation with dog meat received from a caṇḍāla, and argues that in matters of life and death, it is permissible to receive food from anyone without fear of pollution.[65] As in the *Arthaśāstra*, the works of

[59] Aparārka's annotation states that the banishment will be the result if atonement is not made. He reads *kubandha* (disgraceful mark) as *kabandha*, explaining that the brand is shaped like a headless torso. Ānandāśrama skt. series 46, Vol. II, p. 861.
[60] The same *Viṣṇu* (V, 43) also requires corporal punishment (*vadhyaḥ*) for having sexual relations with an *antya* woman, but such grave punishment will be carried out only in cases where atonement is not made.
[61] "*uttama*" means *dvijāti*, especially brāhmaṇas. Ānandāśrama series, *op. cit.*, p. 822.
[62] The term used is *vadhyaḥ*, which Kane interprets as beating rather than death (Jolly's translation). P. V. Kane, *op. cit.*, Vol. II-I, p. 176. See also note 60 above.
[63] *Yāj.* I, 197. *Viṣ.* XXIII, 41.
[64] *Manu*, V, 131. *Yāj.* I, 192. *Viṣ.* XXIII, 50.
[65] *Manu*, X, 104, 108. See also pp. 222-23 of this volume.

Hindu law forbade caṇḍālas from testifying in litigation unrelated to their own community;[66] however, an amendment relaxing this rule states that in the case of the most grievous crimes, exceptions could be made.[67]

There is also a provision requiring that after the daily offering to the deities (*Vaiśvadeva*), food be distributed to caṇḍālas, śvapacas and *patitas*,[68] in the hope of gaining religious merit. Such food was to be distributed by either spreading it out on the ground, like when feeding dogs, birds and insects, or by serving it on broken dishes.[69]

5. Later Sources

The ninth chapter dealing with villages/settlements (*grāma*) in the *Mānasāra*, a study of architecture originally written sometime between AD 500 and 700, states that villages come in eight different spatial forms.[70] To take an example, the second form, called *sarvatobhadra*, is surrounded by walls and internally divided into residential blocks separated by intersecting streets. At the center, a temple of Brahmā, Viṣṇu or Śiva is constructed. In addition to the blocks provided for the four varṇas, there are also those for herders, weavers, tailors, leather tanners, blacksmiths, fish and meat sellers, scribes, physicians, tree bark workers, oil makers, etc. The caṇḍāla neighborhood is to be located outside of the walls. Such a plan is no doubt based on the view that settlements are composed of different castes, with the higher castes living in the central areas and lower castes on their periphery. This plan is very different from the much simpler villages described in the sources dealt with in Chapter VIII of this volume, which date back to the early period of Buddhism. It may be possible to detect here the process of formation of the intercaste division of labor in later periods.

With respect to the untouchability, we find leather makers, fish and meat sellers, drummers, guardsmen, hunters, performers, and basket weavers still living within the walls of settlements, indicating that there was probably not much special concern about coming into contact with such people at that time. Only caṇḍālas were segregated in settlements outside the walls, indicating that at the time the *Mānasāra* was compiled, although some developments had been occurring in the caste system, not much had changed in relation to untouchables.

[66] *Vās.* XVI, 30. *Manu,* VIII, 66, 68. *Nār.* I, 155, 182. *Kāty.* 351.
[67] *Manu,* VIII, 69. *Nār.* I, 188. See also *Arth.* III, 11, 30-31.
[68] *Āp.* II, 4, 9, 5. *Vās.* XI, 9. *Manu,* III, 92. *Yāj.* I, 103.
[69] *Manu,* III, 92. *Yāj.* I, 103: *Manu,* X, 54.
[70] *Mānasāra,* IX, 126-162. P. K. Acharya tr., *Architecture of Mānasāra, Mānasāra Series,* Vol. IV, 2nd ed., New Delhi, 1980, pp. 63-92; especially pp. 69-71.

We find many references to untouchables in accounts written by foreign travelers to India. In chronological order, there is, first, the itinerary of the Chinese Buddhist monk, Fa-hsien, who journeyed through India at the beginning of the fifth century.

> The people of this country do not kill living beings, drink liquor, or eat onions and garlic. The only exception are the caṇḍālas, who are named as evil humans. They live apart from the rest of society, and when they enter the cities, they must beat wooden boards to announce their abnormal presence and enable the residents to avoid crossing paths with them. Pigs and cocks are not raised in India, slaves are not sold, and there are no slaughterhouses or liquor shops in the cities. Shell money is used in commerce. Only caṇḍālas, fishermen and hunters sell meat.[71]

The next account comes from the Chinese monk Hsüan-chuang's record of his travels during the first half of the seventh century.

> The towns and villages are enclosed by expansive, high walls, and their streets, both wide and narrow, weave and cross in all directions. Large gates stand at the entrances to streets, which are lined with eating establishments on both sides. The dwellings of slaughterers, fishermen, performers, executioners, and cistern cleaners are located on the outskirts of villages and cities and are clearly marked with signs. When these people enter villages and cities, they are required to walk on the left hand side of the street.[72]

On his later journey to the south seas during the late seventh century, I-ching commented,

> Those who clean up human waste and other unclean things walk along the streets beating their staffs to let others know of their presence; if one were to accidentally come in contact with such a being, he would have to bath and wash his clothing thoroughly.[73]

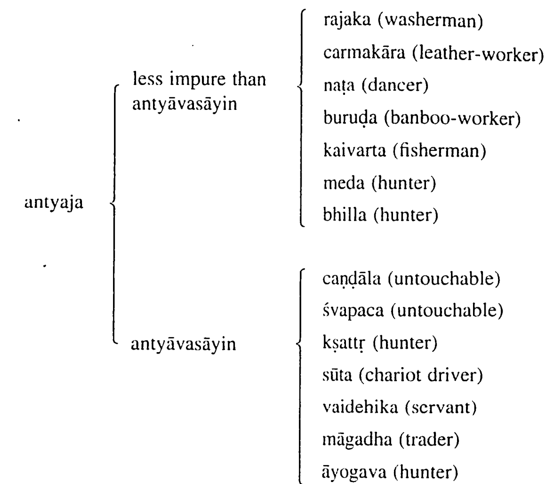
[71] *Taishō,* LI, p. 859b. S. Beal tr., *The Travels of Fah-Hian and Sung-Yun,* 2nd ed., London, 1964, p. 55.
[72] *Taishō,* LI, p. 876a. T. Watters tr., *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India,* Indian ed., Delhi, 1961, p. 147. Li Rongxi's tr., p. 52.
[73] *Taishō,* LIV, p. 225a. J. Takakusu tr., *A Record of the Buddhist Religion as Practised in India and Malay Archipelago by I-Tsing,* Indian ed., Delhi, 1966, p. 139.

In his encyclopedia of India (eleventh century), Al-Bīrūnī provides the following valuable information concerning untouchables: 1) a number of tradespeople who had been included by the *Mānasāra* within the caste composition residing within the walls of settlements were looked upon as untouchables and made to live outside the walls; 2) the untouchable class itself had become vertically stratified in terms of the extent of the defilement.

> After the śūdra follow the people called *Antyaja*,who vender various kinds of services, who are not reckoned amongst any caste (varṇa), but only as members of a certain craft or profession. There are eight classes of them, who freely intermarry with each other, except the fuller, shoemaker, and weaver, for no others would condescend to have anything to do with them, These eight guilds are the fuller, shoemaker, juggler, the basket and shield maker, the sailor, fisherman, the hunter of wild animals and of birds, and the weaver. The four castes (varṇa) do not live together with them in one and the same place. These guilds live near the villages and towns of the four castes, but outside them.
> The people called Hāḍī, Ḍōma (Ḍomba), Caṇḍāla, and Badhatau (*sic*) are not reckoned amongst any caste or guild. They are occupied with dirty work, like the cleansing of the villages and other services. They are considered as one sole class, and distinguished only by their occupations. In fact, they are considered like illegitimate children; for according to general opinion they descend from a Śūdra father and a Brāhmaṇī mother as the children of fornication; therefore they are degraded outcasts. ...Of the classes *beneath* the castes, the Hāḍī are the best spoken of, because they keep themselves free from anything unclean. Next follow the Ḍōma, who play on the lute and sing. The still lower classes practise trades of killing and the inflicting of judicial punishments. The worst of all are the Badhatau, who not only devour the flesh of dead animals, but even of dogs and other beasts.[74]

Al-Bīrūnī's general term for inferiors, *antyaja*, matches the term *antya, antyaja* used in the works of Hindu law. One commentary on the *Yājñavalkya-smṛti*, the *Mitākṣarā*, which was composed at about the same time as Al-Bīrūnī's work, divides *antyaja* into two sub-categories: 1) *antyāvasāyin*, making up seven castes, including caṇḍālas and śvapacas; 2) another seven castes, including launderers and leather makers, who were not as defiling as *antyāvasāyin* (on III, 260, 265).[75]

[74] E. C. Sachau ed. and tr., *Al-Beruni's India*, pp. 100-02.
[75] P. V. Kane, *op. cit.*, II-1, pp. 70-71.



6. The Development of Untouchability

In his detailed study of the history of untouchability in India, V. Jha[76] offers the following four stages of development:

~ BC 600	The origins
BC 600-AD 200	Formative and development period
AD 200-600	Further development period
AD 600-1200	Expansion and strengthening period

The last stage was characterized by an increasing amount of tribal peoples living on the periphery of Hindu society being incorporated into that society as untouchables, and more and more people engaged in work connected with untouchability. The structure of untouchability at this stage resembles the structure of discrimination and segregation found by modern researchers, one that was intensively perpetuated through both the Muslim and British colonial periods in Indian history.[77] Although I have little to add to Jha's periodization scheme, here is my own analysis of the transition that untouchability went through from ancient to medieval times.

[76] V. Jha, "Stages in the History of Untouchables", pp. 14-31.
[77] Untouchables of modern times differed from those in ancient times in that they were organized into *castes* practicing segregation and discrimination among themselves. Castes ranged

There were three prominent differences between ancient untouchability as described above and the untouchability that has been recorded by modern and contemporary surveys. First, in comparison to the many untouchable castes and large untouchable population in modern times, the people in ancient India who were considered untouchable, like the caṇḍālas, made up a very small portion of sub-śūdra inferior people. Secondly, in ancient times, all types of inferior people, including the caṇḍālas, generally maintained their tribal organization and lived as fairly tight communities on the periphery of Aryan agrarian society. In modern times, on the other hand, people of different untouchable castes live on the outskirts of each village as segregated communities. Finally, many untouchables in modern times not only engage in traditional occupations, but also work as farm laborers during the busy agricultural seasons. The caṇḍāla of ancient times did not directly participate in any facet of agricultural production, as far as I know.

What was the historical process of such changes, including an increase in untouchable castes and in the total untouchable population, their diffusion into segregated communities around villages, and their participation in farm labor? The problems involved in answering this question have yet to be clarified, but in the writings of the Hindu legal commentators and al-Bīrūnī, we can say that such changes were already in progress during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. It would therefore be correct to understand them as part of the transition or evolution from ancient untouchability concentrated on the caṇḍālas to medieval untouchability, characterized by discrimination against many socially stratified castes scattered throughout rural India in segregated communities located on the outskirts of agrarian villages. The following four points might explain what generally happened during such a transition.

To begin with, within the tribes who lost their hunting and gathering territories due to the expansion of agrarian society (with śūdras as its major force of reclamation), there were those who could not make the transition to agriculture and were thus forced to make their livelihood on the periphery of agrarian society engaged in tasks (often looked upon as too impure for the four varṇas to participate in) supplementing agricultural life.

Secondly, from the sixth and seventh centuries on, during a period characterized by the establishment of a feudal order based on the regional decentralization of political authority and decline of urban commerce in favor of regional economy, village organization went through gradual changes into self-subsistence communities supported by many artisan and service-rendering castes. Within this process, some artisan castes broke up, and their members migrated to villages all over a given region. The untouchable and other inferior groups living on the periphery of agrarian society were also caught up within this village reorganization, moving to the outskirts of certain villages and maintaining their tribal organization in the form of castes. Given the nature of the Indian climate, which is clearly divided into dry and rainy seasons, agriculture required the employment of large amounts of labor during fixed periods of time. During these times the labor of artisans and inferior castes was needed in addition to the traditional services they provided.

Thirdly, the ideology of purity and pollution, which was developed by the religious leaders of Hindu society, the brāhmaṇa, contributed to the social stratification in villages organized according to many castes. Along with the development of this ideology, strata of inferior castes and artisans who were previously not looked upon as ritually impure were designated as "untouchable." Moreover, stratification occurred among the old and new untouchable castes based on differing degrees of pollution, resulting in exclusionary behavior among them.

Finally, the existence of untouchables functioned to reduce the tension arising from inequality within the village community and brought about a certain amount of stability, leading to order and stability within the regional society and ultimately within the medieval state. Therefore, the developments that took place in untouchability were responses to the expectations of ruling classes and landlords.

from those that could defile someone on sight to those for which defilement remained ambiguous. There were also regional differences regarding untouchability. J. H. Hutton, who was in charge of the Indian census of 1931 offered the following nine criteria for determining "depressed castes."

(1) Whether the caste or class in question can be served by clean Brāhmaṇs or not.
(2) Whether the caste or class in question can be served by the barbers, water-carriers, tailors, etc., who serve caste Hindus.
(3) Wheter the caste in question pollutes a high-caste Hindu by contact or by proximity.
(4) Whether the caste or class in question is one from whose hands a caste Hindu can take water.
(5) Whether the caste or class in question is barred from using public conveniences, such as roads, ferries, wells or schools.
(6) Whether the caste or class in question is debarred from the use of Hindu temples.
(7) Whether in ordinary social intercourse a well-educated member of the caste or class in question will be treated as an equal by higher caste members of the same educational level.
(8) Whether the caste or class in question is merely depressed on account of its own ignorance, illiteracy or poverty, and but for that, would be subject to no social disability.
(9) Whether the caste or class in question is depressed on account of its occupation, and for no other reason than that occupation it would be subject to no social disability.

Based on these nine criteria, the 1931 census estimated that 14% of the total Indian population (including Indian States) was occupied by exterior/depressed castes (21% of the Hindu population). J. H. Hutton, *Caste in India, Its Nature, Function, and Origins,* 4th ed., Bombay, 1963, pp. 192-211.

The role played directly or indirectly in the development of untouchability during this time by the ruling classes on both the state and local levels was a very important one.

As we have seen, with the improvement of śūdra status in medieval times, Indian society was divided into two strata, i.e. that of proper Hindus (caste Hindus) and that of discriminated Hindus (untouchables). And as we know, this structure has continued to the present; changing slowly through developments in social reform.

Appendix I: The Forests and their Dwellers*

Also relegated to inferior status and discrimination along with caṇḍālas were tribal peoples living in the forests on the periphery of Hindu society. From ancient times these people continued to be incorporated into agrarian society throughout Indian history, as members of both the śūdra varṇa and untouchable groups.

The forests (*araṇya, aṭavī, vana*) provided both village and urban residents with rich supplies of various products, became recreation spots, and were used as sanctuaries and refuges. In other words, forests were seen as a counterpart of agrarian society and its setting in villages and towns. This is the reason why forests became the places where people, seeking religious enlightenment, lived after renouncing the secular world. We have seen that dwelling in the forest was the third stage of life following the student and householder phases of *dvija* life.

According to the Buddhist sources, it was believed that gods or spirits resided in the trees and that the forests were populated by ferocious demons, like *rākṣasas* and *yakṣas*. The wild animals and snakes that wandered in the forests were also frightening. Despite such fears and superstitions, the roads cutting through the forests were frequented by caravans, travelers and local residents alike. Although areas occupied by forest land would continually decrease with the expansion of agrarian society, the meaningless, wasteful cutting down of trees was always condemned, and tree planting encouraged as beneficial.

Representative of forest dwellers were the hunters, who brought the venison they killed and hides they skinned to the cities to trade for agricultural products. According to the early Buddhist sources, there were deer hunters, bird hunters and lizard hunters, each growp residing together in their own village communities. Another group of forest residents were bandits who, according to some Buddhist sources, numbered as many as five hundred at one time. The forests where they were active were called *aṭavī*, a term that was also referred to forest dwelling tribal peoples. There were sometimes *aṭavī* uprisings that threatened to destroy whole kingdoms, and there were local people who were forced to abandon their homes due to attacks by *aṭavīs*.

The works of Hindu law contain little about the forests, other than descriptions of the third phase of *dvija* life. Of what there is, the *Manu-smṛti* mentions such forest dwellers (*vanagocara*) as hunters, bird hunters, cattle herders, fishermen, root diggers, snake catchers, and seed and grain gatherers. It also recognizes that forest dwellers can be called as witnesses in the settlement of boundary disputes between villages (VIII, 259-60). We also find that there were many mulattoes of mixed varṇa blood, like the Niṣādas and Ugras, living as hunters and gathers in the forests (X, 32, 48-50). *Āṭavikas* (forest people) are also explained as "concealed rogues" along with burglars (IX, 257). One-sixth of the produce amassed from the forest was to be rendered to the king (VII, 131-32), and the wasteful cutting of trees and grass was considered to constitute criminal behavior (VIII, 285; XI, 65, 143, 145).

The *Arthaśāstra* discusses the forest land as the economic base of the state and the relationship between the state and forest dwellers. In the former, many forest products are listed and categorized with detailed explanations. Forests that have special significance for the state include animal forests, elephant forests, lumber forests, and "forests without fear" (*abhayavana*), in the last of which catching and killing of animals was prohibited for religious reasons. All types of forest were to be subjected to very detailed management and supervision.

In the *Arthaśāstra* the terms *vanacara* and *araṇyacara* (one active in the forest) were used to refer to forest dwelling tribes, hermits, traders, herders, hunters, those in their third stage of life, and other ascetics. Intelligence agents would be sent into the forest under the guise of such people to infiltrate and police bandits, forest tribes and foreign enemies. Also the hunting tribes and caṇḍālas residing in forests on the frontiers of kingdoms were put to work as border guards.

Forest dwellers often comprised a force that no kingdom could take lightly. Despite the fact that they sometimes represented a strong support group for kings, forest dwellers could also wreak havoc upon their realms, cities and villages. After mentioning forest chieftains as threats to reigning kings along with disfavored members of the royal family, neighboring kings, etc., the *Arthaśāstra* warns rulers not to shirk their duties in keeping track of the movements of forest dwellers within their realms. The work also recommends various means to reduce the power of forest dwellers, including military intervention.

In regions where agrarian society bordered on forests, the political, economic and cultural contact and conflict between forest people and agrarian communities seen in our three sources would continue throughout later periods, with the continuing assimilation of forest dwellers into village society.

* This Appendix is the summary of my article "Forest and Forest Tribes in Ancient India."

Appendix II: Ideas About Inter-Varṇa Marriage and Offspring*

One important issue facing the brāhmaṇa ideologues who strove to rationalize and systematize the varṇa system was how to prevent children being born between members of different varṇas and thus keep the four-varṇa ritual order intact and functioning according to plan. On the other hand, there existed non-Aryan peoples and tribes on the periphery of varṇa society, the majority of whom were regarded by those same ideologues to be of śūdra or lower status. The second issue facing them was to explain their origin in relation to the original four varṇas. Brāhmaṇa ideologues cleverly solved these two issues by the theory of *varṇasaṃkara* (the mixture of varṇas), which may be summed up as follows.

Although the related provisions contained in the *Dharmasūtras* are sometimes a bit inconsistent from source to source, the basic theory, beginning with the principles of *anuloma* and *pratiloma* (See Chapter I, Section 2-B), was formed at this stage in the history of Hindu law (see Table I). The *Manu-smṛti* added more substance to it, and developed some aspects like rules regarding relationships between *varṇasaṃkara* groups and occupations, and also the idea of *vrātya* (see Tables II & III). Related ideas contained in the later works of Hindu law were more or less presented and explained within the framework created by the *Dharmasūtras* and the *Manu-smṛti* (see Table IV).

The *Arthaśāstra* differs little from the works of Hindu law in its ideas concerning *varṇasaṃkara*; however, it shows a relatively tolerant attitude towards offspring of mothers one rank lower than the fathers (see Table IV). At the stage of the commentaries written on the works of Hindu law, the categorization scheme became more detailed, as well as more confusing. For example, we observe an increase in the number of *varṇasaṃkara* groups and more details concerning their relationships to specific occupations.

In any case, there is no way that the Vedic/Hindu theory of *varṇasaṃkara* came into existence based on historical reality. For example, it would have been impossible for the offspring of brāhmaṇa fathers and vaiśya mothers could have formed the Ambaṣṭha group. Rather, from the fact that such offspring were entitled by Hindu law to some inheritance, it seems that they lived for the most part within the brāhmaṇa ranks, although not treated as equals. While *pratiloma* marital relations were in reality strictly discouraged and prohibited, from a number of stories concerning brāhmaṇa women marrying kṣatriya kings, we can suppose that some *pratiloma* relationships did come about.

One influence that the *varṇasaṃkara* theory did have on society was to offer a formula for incorporating tribal peoples into the varṇa order, thus broadening the framework of varṇa-based social relationships to include people existing on the

* This Appendix is the summary of my article "On the Theory of the Mixture of Varṇas."

TABLE I Categorization of *Varṇasaṃkara* Offspring According to the *Dharmasūtras*

Parent Varṇa/Group		*Gautama* IV, 16-17	*Gautama* IV, 18-21	*Baudhāyana* I, 8, 16, 6-8; I, 9, 17, 2-8	*Vāsiṣṭha* XVIII, 1-9
Father	Mother	Offspring Varṇa/Sub-Varṇa Group			
B	B	B	B	B	B
	K	[B]	Mūrdhāvasika	[B]	
	V	Niṣāda	Bhṛjyakaṇṭha	Ambaṣṭha	Ambaṣṭha
	Ś	Pāraśava	Pāraśava	Niṣāda (Pāraśava)	Niṣāda (Pāraśava)
K	**B**	**Sūta**	**Sūta**	**Sūta**	**Sūta**
	K	K	K	K	K
	V	Ambaṣṭha	Māhiṣya	[K]	
	Ś	Dauṣyanta	Yavana	Ugra	Ugra
V	**B**	**Kṛta (Kṣattṛ)**	**Māgadha**	**Vaidehaka**	**Rāmaka**
	K	**Māgadha**	**Dhīvara**	**Āyogava**	**Pulkasa**
	V	V	V	V	V
	Ś	Ugra	Karaṇa	Rathakāra	[Ambaṣṭha]
Ś	**B**	**Caṇḍāla**	**Caṇḍāla**	**Caṇḍāla**	**Caṇḍāla**
	K	**Vaidehaka**	**Pulkasa**	**Kṣattṛ**	**Vaiṇa**
	V	**Āyogava**	**Vaideha[ka]**	**Māgadha**	**Antyāvasāyin**
	Ś	Ś	Ś	Ś	Ś

Baudhāyana (I, 8, 16, 9-12)

Ambaṣṭha	B	**Śvapāka**
Ugra	K	**Vaiṇa**
Niṣāda	V	**Pulkasa**
V	Niṣāda	Kukkuṭa[ka]
Pulkasa	Niṣāda	**Kukkuṭaka**

Baudhāyana (I, 9, 17, 9-14)

Ambaṣṭha	Ugra	(*anuloma*)
Niṣāda	Vaidehaka	(*pratiloma*)
Ugra	Kṣattṛ	Śvapāka
Vaidhaka	Ambaṣṭha	**Vaiṇa**
Niṣāda	Ś	Pulkasa
Ś	Niṣāda	**Kukkuṭaka**

Key: B = Brāhmaṇa; K = Kṣatriya; V = Vaiśya; Ś = Śūdra; **Bold letters** = *pratiloma*

TABLE II Categorization of *Varṇasaṃkara* Offspring According to the *Manu-smṛti*

Varṇa/Group			Gategory				
Father	Mother	Offspring	a	p	B	Ś	Occupation/Citation
1st Generation							
B	B	B			○		Priest
	K	[anantara]	○		○		Same as father, but inferior due to mother's varṇa (X, 6, 14, 41)
	V	Ambaṣṭha	○		○		Therapeutic medicine (X, 8, 13, 41, 47)
	Ś	Niṣāda or Pārāśava	○		○	○	Fishing (X, 8, 48)
K	B	Sūda		○	○		Hores and cart operator (X, 11, 17, 26, 47)
	K	K					Politics, military
	V	[anantara]	○				Same as father, but inferior due to mother's varṇa (X, 6, 14, 41)
	Ś	Ugra	○			○	Hole-dwelling animal hunter (X, 9, 13, 49)
V	B	Vaideha[ka]		○	○		Service for women (X, 11, 13, 17, 26, 47)
	K	Māghadha		○			Commerce (X, 11, 17, 26, 47)
	V	V					Agriculture, herding, commerce
	Ś	[anantara]	○			○	Śūdra status due to mother's varṇa (X, 6, 14)
Ś	B	Caṇḍāla		○	○	○	Untouchable (X, 12, 16, 26, 51-56)
	K	Kṣattṛ		○		○	Hole-dwelling animal hunter (X, 12, 13, 16, 26, 49)
	V	Āyogava		○		○	Carpenter (X, 12, 16, 26, 48) cf. X, 35
	Ś	Ś				○	Service to *dvijas*.
2nd and over second Generation							
B	Ugra	Āvṛta	○		○	○	(X, 15)
	Ambaṣṭha	Ābhīra	○		○○		(X, 15)
	Āyogava	Dhigvaṇa	○		○	○	Leathercraft (X, 15, 49)
Ś	Niṣāda	Kukkuṭaka		○	○	○○	(X, 18)
Niṣāda	Ś	Pukkasa	○		○	○○	Hole-dwelling animal hunter (X, 18, 49)
	Āyogava	Mārgava, Dāsa, Kaivarta	○	○	○	○○	Boatman, fisherman (X, 34, 35)
	Vaideha	Kārāvara	○	○	○○	○	Leathercraft (X, 36)
		Āhiṇḍika	○	○	○○	○	(X, 37)
Vaideha	Ambaṣṭha	Veṇa	○	○	○○		Drummer (X, 19, 49)
	Āyogava	Maitreyaka		○○	○	○	Singer of praises, bell ringer (X, 33, 35)
	Kārāvara	Andhra	○	○○	○○○	○	Hunter segregated from village community (X, 36, 48)
	Niṣāda	Medha	○	○	○○	○	
Kṣattṛ	Ugra	Śvapāka	○	○		○○	Segregated from village untouchable (III, 92; X, 19, 51-56)
Caṇḍāla	Vaideha	Pāṇḍu-Sopāka		○○	○○	○	Bamboo craftsman (X, 37)
	Pukkasa	Sopāka	○	○	○○	○○○	Inferior work, like slaughtering (X, 38)
	Niṣāda	Antyāvasāyin	○	○	○○	○○	Cemetary work, despised even by sub-varṇa inferiors (X, 39)
Dasyn	Āyogava	Sairandhra		○		○	Bathing servent, trapper (X, 32, 35)
		Cuñcu	?				Hunter (X, 48)
		Madgu	?				Hunter (X, 48)

Key: See TABLE I ; a = *anuloma*; p = *pratiloma*.
The type of mixture of blood (*anuloma/pratiloma*) and the mixture of brāhmaṇa/śūdra blood are shown by ○ sign. Of the 17 *varṇasaṃkara* offspring in the TABLE from Āvṛta down to Sairandhra, 15 have brāhmaṇa blood mixture, 2 kṣatriya, 10 vaiśya and 15 śūdra.

TABLE III A Listing of *Vrātyas* According to the *Manu-smṛti*

Varṇa	Vrātya	Citation
B	Bhṛjjakaṇṭaka, Āvantya, Vāṭadhāna, Puṣpadha, Śaikha	X, 21
K	Jhalla, Malla, Licchivi, Naṭa, Karaṇa, Khasa, Draviḍa	X, 22
	Pauṇḍraka, Coḍa, Draviḍa, Kāmboja, Yavana, Śaka, Pārada, Pahlava, Cīna, Kirāta, Darada	X, 44
V	Sudhanvan, Ācārya, Kāruṣa, Vijanman, Maitra, Sātvata	X, 23

periphery. This can also be said for the idea of *vrātyas* (see TABLE III, also chapter I, 1-B). Further study into both kin and regional groups which were placed in *varṇasaṃkara* categories will no doubt reveal much more about the process by which they were actually incorporated into varṇa society, as the discussion of caṇḍālas presented here has shown.

TABLE IV Categorization of *Varṇasaṃkara* Offspring According to the Later *Dharmaśāstras* and the *Arthaśāstra*

Parent Varṇa/Group		*Yājñavalkya* I, 90-95	*Viṣṇu* XVI, 1-6	*Nārada* XII, 102-113	*Arthaśāstra* III, 7, 20-35
Father	Mother	Offspring Varṇas/Sub-Varṇa Group			
B	B	B	B	B	B
	K	Mūrdhāvasikta	[K]	[anantara]	[B]
	V	Ambaṣṭha	[V]	Ambaṣṭha	Ambaṣṭha
	Ś	Niṣāda/Pāraśava	[Ś]	Pāraśava	Niṣāda/Pāraśava
K	**B**	**Sūta**	**Sūta**	**Sūta**	**Sūta**
	K	K	K	K	K
	V	Māhiṣya	[V]	[anantara]	[K]
	Ś	Ugra	[Ś]	Niṣāda (Ugra?)	Ugra
V	**B**	**Vaidehaka**	**Vaidehaka**	**Vaidehaka**	**Vaidehaka**
	K	**Māgadha**	**Pukkasa**	**Māgadha**	**Māgadha**
	V	V	V	V	V
	Ś	Karaṇa	[Ś]	[anantara]	[Ś]
Ś	**B**	**Caṇḍāla**	**Caṇḍāla**	**Caṇḍāla**	**Caṇḍāla**
	K	**Kṣattṛ**	**Māgadha**	**Kṣattṛ**	**Kṣattṛ**
	V	**Āyogava**	**Āyogava**	**Āyogava**	**Āyogava**
	Ś	Ś	Ś	Ś	Ś

Māhiṣya	Karaṇa	Rathakāra	*Yaj.* I, 95
Ugra	Niṣāda	**Kukkuṭa**	*Arth.* III, 7, 31-33.
Niṣāda	Ugra	Pulkasa	
Ambaṣṭha	Vaidehaka	Vaiṇa	
Vaidehaka	Ambaṣṭha	**Kuśīlava**	
Ugra	Kṣattṛ	Śvapāka	

Key: See TABLE I.

Chapter XI
BRĀHMAṆAS AND CAṆḌĀLAS: ONE ASPECT OF ANCIENT INDIA'S VARṆA SOCIAL SYSTEM*

The objective of the present chapter is to shed light on the nature of the varṇa system through an investigation of items mentioning brāhmaṇas and caṇḍālas together as the two extremes in the ancient Indian social hierarchy. The source materials that will be used are two orthodox brahmanic classics, the *Manu-smṛti* and the *Mahābhārata*, in addition to a number of texts from the Buddhist literature.

1. Knowledge of the *Dharma*

In contrast to the examples cited in the previous chapter, which depict discrimination against caṇḍālas within the everyday life of ancient Indian society, there are stipulations contradicting this aspect (*Manu-smṛti,* II, 238-40).

> A person of faith can obtain pure learning even from an inferior person; he can obtain the highest *dharma* even from a person of the lowest class, and a superior wife even from a bad family.
> He can obtain ambrosia even from poison, good words even from children, good deeds even from the enemy, and gold even from impure substances.
> Superior wives (or wives and gems), learning, the *dharma*, purity, good words, and various arts may be acquired from anyone.

The commentators on the *Manu-smṛti* interpret the phrase "person of the lowest class" (*antya*) as indicating a caṇḍāla, while "inferior person" (*avara*) and "bad family" (*duṣkula*) indicate the śūdra varṇa or outcaste *āryas*. The meaning of the *dharma* which can be learned from even the most inferior is not explained, but from the use of the word *para*, or best, as an adjective modifying it, it may be understood to mean "the most exalted doctrines" of Hindu thought.

The next problem is one of practice. Could someone actually learn the most exalted *dharma* from a caṇḍāla? Such a possibility, which would be regarded in everyday life as utterly impossible, is mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* (III, 198-206) like this.

*This chapter is based on a paper of the same title published in *The Memoirs of The Toyo Bunko*, 58 (2000), pp. 99-116.

A brāhmaṇa by the name of Kauśika decided to depart for Mithirā, a prosperous city under the rule of the famed King Janaka, in order to learn the *dharma* from a hunter who knew and observed it (*dharma-vyādha*). Although Kauśika warned the hunter that the cruelty of his occupation of selling venison and beef at the slaughterhouse did not befit him, the hunter replied, "My occupation (*svakarma*) is the result of evil deeds done in past lives, the work of my family from many generations of ancestors (*kulocitakarma*), and a calling accorded to me by the Creator (*dhātrā vihitaṃ karma*). However, I merely sell the flesh killed by others. I neither kill nor eat meat. The results stemming from deeds of the past cannot be avoided. To abandon this occupation would be sinful (*adharma*); to continue this work is an act of virtue (*dharma*)." The hunter then explained, "In this, the land of King Janaka, each and every subject strictly follows the obligations of his varṇa. Even the lowliest śūdra can through virtue and merit become the equal of a kṣatriya or brāhmaṇa." Then the hunter proceeded to teach Kauśika various aspects of the *dharma*. After hearing the hunter's discourse, Kauśika exclaimed in praise, "You are like a great sage (*ṛṣi*)! You have a perfect knowledge of the *dharma*." The hunter, in order to show Kauśika the greatness of the merit of his virtue, invited the brāhmaṇa to his home, which was as resplendent as any palace in Heaven. There he introduced his parents and told of the merit of filial piety.
Deeply impressed by the hunter's discourse, Kauśika asked, "Tell me about your previous lives." The hunter replied, "In previous times I was a brāhmaṇa immersed in the study of the Veda; but I erred and committed the sin of hurting a holy man. It was that holy man's curse that doomed me to be reborn as a hunter. However, due to the mercy of that same holy man, I shall be able to perfect myself in this life and ascend into Heaven, and after the annulment of the curse, return to the life of a brāhmaṇa." Upon hearing this, Kauśika said, "Your present calling in life is in accordance with your birth; therefore, it is not defiling. You will become a great brāhmaṇa. I regard you as a brāhmaṇa even now. There are brāhmaṇas today whose evil deeds put them on a par with śūdras. On the other hand, there are śūdras whose meritorious acts make them the equals of brāhmaṇas. You, who are virtuous and knowledgeable of the *dharma*, are without sin." Kauśika then paid homage to the hunter by circling around him clockwise before taking his leave. The hunter placed his hands together in prayer and watched Kauśika disappear into the horizon.

The above tale classifies the hunter as of the śūdra varṇa; but given that his occupation was selling meat, he was surely a caṇḍāla or the equivalent śvapaca. Caṇḍālas were considered at times inferior to śūdras, and at others the most inferior śūdras.[1] The relationship depicted in this tale between the brāhmaṇa and the hunter is the complete reverse from ordinary daily life, with the latter instructing the former in the lessons of the *dharma*, and a meat vendor being praised by a brāhmaṇa as wise (*kṛtaprajña*), intelligent (*medhāvin*), knowledgeable of the *dharma* (*dharmavid*), and the greatest supporter and observer of the *dharma* (*dharmabhṛtām vara*), not to mention being called a veritable brāhmaṇa by his admirer. The precept of fulfilling one's obligations (*svadharma*) being preached by the worst victim of that precept, a caṇḍāla, is an extraordinary scenario, which has been created for the purpose of dramatizing the absolute character of this *svadharma*, the very root of varṇa society.

Although the exalted *dharma*[2] was explained as preachable by any member of society, there was also danger in allowing a caṇḍāla to utter those words. The editors of the *Mahābhārata*, all of whom were probably orthodox brāhmaṇas, were not about to destroy their foundation by refuting the very basis of the varṇa social order that ranks brāhmaṇas in the place of ultimate superiority. The editors may have noticed this danger, and tried to alleviate it by adding the rather strained part about the meat vendor having been a brāhmaṇa in his former life, soon to regain his status, and living in a home rivaling the palaces of Heaven.

2. In Times of Distress

Another example of ignoring the varṇa hierarchy is the category of "the law in

[1] P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. II-1, pp. 167-68. R. S. Sharma, *Śūdras in Ancient India*, pp. 138-39, 229. See also p. 196 of this volume.
[2] In Indian thought, the term "*dharma*" is used in a broad sense, encompassing such ideas as law, duty, custom, righteousness, morality, religion and merit. Such a flexible interpretation of the term becomes evident in our tale here. For example, though *ahiṃsā* is highly praised, there is no one in this world who can avoid killing. Even the strictest ascetic who takes the vow of respecting all life will eventually kill something. The criteria for good and evil (*dharma-adharma*) in this world are ambiguous; therefore, only by concentrating on one's own innate obligations can one achieve fame (III, 199, 28-34). Secondly, the meaning of the term "*dharma*" is subtle (*sūkṣuma*), diversified (*bahuśākha*) and limitless (*anantika*). At such inordinate times as facing death or getting married, lying is not a sin; rather the lie (*anṛta*) can become the truth (*satya*), or the truth a lie. It is truth that contributes the most to attaining the happiness experienced by living things (*bhūtahita*) (III, 200, 1-4). Such an ambiguous interpretation of "*dharma*" appears in all the orthodox literature, beginning with the *Manu-smṛti* (II, 6-14; IV, 175-76; XII, 108-13). Such ambiguity lends flexibility to the central concept of Hindu thought and makes it possible to place the complex problems of reality within the broad framework of "*dharma*." This is one very important characteristic feature of Hindu thought.

times of distress" (*āpaddharma*).[3] Here are two examples from the *Manu-smṛti* (X, 106, 108).

> When [Saint] Vāmadeva, who was deeply knowledgeable of both *dharma* and *adharma*, was suffering [from starvation], he wished to eat the flesh of a dog to sustain his life, and thus was not polluted.

> When [Saint] Viśvāmitra, who was deeply knowledgeable of both *dharma* and *adharma*, was suffering from starvation, he wished to eat the haunch of a dog, receiving it from the hand of a caṇḍāla.

In other words, no matter what one chooses to eat in times of distress, the sin of pollution will not be incurred. What is interesting for the present subject is the debate between Viśvāmitra and the caṇḍāla over the dog meat. According to the *Mahābhārata* (XII, 139),

> During a certain famine, the great holy man Viśvāmitra was wandering around hungry in the forest, when he came upon a small village inhabited by caṇḍālas (also referred to in the story as śvapacas and mātaṅgas), which was littered with the bones and hides of animals. He begged for food throughout the village, but was refused. So he decided to wait until nightfall, then steal the haunch of a dog from one of the huts. Haplessly, he was seen by the owner of the hut, upon which the saint announced his name and status. When asked by the surprised hut owner what he was doing there, Viśvāmitra replied, "I gave into starvation and decided to commit the heinous crime of theft; but in times of such distress, neither theft nor partaking of unclean meat are punishable acts."
> Upon hearing this, the caṇḍāla said, "The dog is the most unclean beast among the animals, and the haunch is the most unclean part of its flesh. In addition, stealing such a piece of meat from a caṇḍāla, who is the most unclean human in existence, is a criminal (*adharma*) act, and unbefitting you, the leading pundit among those knowledgeable of the *dharma*. Find some other way to acquire food to sustain your life!" Viśvāmitra answered, saying, "There is no other way. Living is better than dying. After saving my life, I will suffer the most austere penance in retribution for my acts." The caṇḍāla became more incensed, saying, "Wouldn't you rather die than eat unclean flesh? I may be a miserable sinner, but what you are about to do will strip you of your brāhmaṇa status. Both I, who gave you the meat and you, who partook of it, will have committed serious crimes. You would be going against everything held sacred by the Veda and the other *dharma* teachings. Is it alright to forget the difference between what you can eat and what you cannot?" The holy man replied, "I; who am in the pursuit of religious perfection, will eat the flesh of a dog to protect my body, the bastion of that pursuit. For one who knows the truth, such an act is meritorious. I will save my life now, and perform purification rites later. It is more important to live by unclean food than to die by starvation. It is written that in times of such distress, it matters not what one receives, nor what one eats. Even if I eat this meat, I will not have committed any crime depriving me of my brāhmaṇa status," then left carrying the meat to feed himself and his wife. At that moment, Indra brought the rain to rejuvenate the earth and all its living things. Later Viśvāmitra performed ablution and was purified.

[3] *Āpaddharma* refers to relief in times of crisis pertaining to individuals in their eating habits, occupations, etc. (for example, eating food forbidden by law or engaging in work ordinarily performed by members of an inferior varṇa); however, the *Mahābhārata* also describes the *āpaddharma* of the kingdom; i.e., temporary legislation allowing tax increases or appropriation of wealth that would be considered illegal under ordinary conditions, or even allowing a śūdra to ascend the throne. See also Chapter I, 2-C of this volume.

In the argument that arose between Viśvāmitra and the caṇḍāla, the latter's standpoint was the correct one according to common sense, and Viśvāmitra should have acquiesced to and praised the caṇḍāla in recognition that "the truth (*dharma*) transcends one's birth." However, through the employment of the concept of *āpaddharma*, a reversal occurred in favor of the holy man, leaving "truth" suspended in midair. The caṇḍāla could do nothing but watch the holy man depart with the dog meat.[4] In conclusion, the *Mahābhārata* praises Viśvāmitra's actions as, "of those who had superior learning and merit, interpreting what is *dharma* and what is not in a successful effort to escape a threat to his life."

Since a wide gap existed between reality and theory regarding the varṇa system, the concept of *āpaddharma* was needed to bridge that gap. The lives of people who find it impossible to earn a living through the occupations required of them by varṇa law, and such behavior as eating and drinking in noncompliance with that law, can be rationalized as semi-permissible through the application of this concept.

[4] It would naturally follow from this story that Viśvāmitra took the meat into the forest, where his wife was waiting, and together they ate it for supper. However, the Critical Edition (Poona) does not state explicitly whether they partook of it or not. The compilers of the *Mahābhārata* seem to have gotten the holy man off the hook by having it rain before he reached home for the canine repast (XII, 139, 88-90). In Kinjawadekar's edition, Viśvāmitra takes the meat, cooks it in conformance with religious ritual, then offers it to the gods (XII, 141, 94-96), while the Critical Edition leaves that part out. The editors of the Critical Edition note that this part was probably added later in order to emphasize that the holy man's behavior in such a situation was not sinful. See Critical Edition, Vol. 14, p. 938, note 89.

That is to say, through the existence of provisional laws easing the stipulations imposed on the varṇa system, aspects of reality that diverged from varṇa law in principle could be made semi-acceptable. By casting the person who unwillingly saved a holy man from starvation as a caṇḍāla, and making the food acquired to ward off that starvation the loin of a dog, the author of the above tale is impressing upon the listener the absolute, unconditional nature of *āpaddharma*. However, he has not taken up the problem that will be dealt with in the next section, the "transcendence of the holy man." Actually, he doesn't have to, since the existence of *āpaddharma* does not require recourse to such transcendence.

3. Transcendence of the Holy Man

The following passage in the *Manu-smṛti* (IX, 23-24) on the marriage of holy men is another case in point.

> Akṣamālā, a woman of the lowest birth, by being united to [the holy man] Vasiṣṭha, and Śāraṅgī to [another holy man] Mandapāla, both became highly respected women.
> These and other women of low birth have improved themselves worthy in this world through the outstanding merit of their husbands.

According to Hindu law, marriage in principle must be *sa-varṇa*; that is, consummated between persons of the same varṇa. However, the legal codes also recognize *anuloma* (natural order), as a secondary or quasi-legal arrangement, allowing a man to marry a woman born beneath his varṇa. Marriage under the above *Manu-smṛti* stipulation corresponds to the principle of *anuloma*; however, ritually impure, untouchable caṇḍāla women are exceptions to this quasi-legal arrangement. It also goes without saying that sexual relations between the purest brāhmaṇa man and a caṇḍāla woman were strictly forbidden. According to the *Manu-smṛti* XI, 176, any brāhmaṇa unknowingly engaging in intimate relations with a caṇḍāla woman would be stripped of his status, while any brāhmaṇa knowingly becoming so involved would himself be relegated to the status of caṇḍāla.[5] Nevertheless, the term "a woman of the lowest birth (*adhamayonijā*)" in the above citation has been interpreted by some commentators as implying a caṇḍāla woman, and "women of low birth (*apakṛṣṭaprasūtayaḥ*)" as including both śūdra and caṇḍāla women, suggest-

[5] See also *Gautama Dhs.*, XXIII, 32-33 and *Baudhāyana Dhs.*, II, 2, 4, 14. Even the *Arthaśāstra*, which is much more relaxed than Hindu law, forbids and punishes marriage between *āryas*, including śūdras, and caṇḍālas. See pp. 202-03 of this volume.

ing that this kind of marriage was possible for brāhmaṇas of such high virtue and merit as Vasiṣṭha and Mandapāla.

Akṣamālā is also called Arundhatī, and is described in ancient legends as beautiful, pure, dutiful, and respectful. However, her origins as described in the *Purāṇic Encyclopaedia* are mythological, her mother and father belonging to the lineage of the god Brahmā and many of her fellow siblings and kin being holy men.[6] On the other hand, the *Skanda Purāṇa*, a more recent work of that genre, contains the item that Akṣamālā was the daughter of a caṇḍāla. Here, long ago during a very serious famine, Vasiṣṭha and a group of his followers, who were starving, came upon the home of a caṇḍāla and proceeded to request food. The caṇḍāla first refused on the grounds that it was "in violation of the *dharma*," but ended up granting the request on the grounds that Vasiṣṭha take his daughter Akṣamālā as his wife.[7] As another example of the application of *āpaddharma*, this story replaces the temporarily polluting meat of a dog, related in the previous section, with permanent polluting wedlock to a caṇḍāla woman, suggesting also the possibility that holy men were able to transcend the purity and pollution of everyday varṇa life. In the Buddhist work entitled *Mātaṅga-sūtra*, as well, Vasiṣṭha is described as having taken a caṇḍāla woman for his wife, and that two of their sons became holy men,[8] demonstrating that this story of Vasiṣṭha was fairly widespread.

The other woman mentioned above, Śāraṅgī, or Śārṅgī, appears in the *Mahābhārata* (I, 220-25), which relates that her husband, Mandapāla, was a great holy man of deep scholarship and strict asceticism. Through such severe training he was able to develop the power to discard his body and travel to the world of his ancestors (Pitṛloka); however, since he had not met one of the three human obligations, to bear a son, he was not allowed to enter that world. So Mandapāla returned to the human world, and in order to bear as many sons as possible in as quick a time as possible, he transformed himself into a Śārṅgaka bird and took a mate (a Śārṅgikā) by the name of Jaritā, who bore him four children. Although this story does not identify Śāraṅgī as a woman of the lowest birth, it does indicate that with regard to marriage, holy men rose above the usual customs.

The *Mahābhārata* (XIV, 54) contains another, quite different episode of an encounter between a brāhmaṇa and a caṇḍāla dealing with the question of transcending purity and pollution in daily life.

> As a reward for pleasing the god Kṛṣṇa (Viṣṇu), the holy man Uttaṅka, a

[6] V. Mani, *Purāṇic Encyclopaedia*, Delhi, 1975: s.v. Arundhatī, Akṣamālā, Vasiṣṭha, Kardama, Devahūtī, etc.
[7] S. A. Dange, *Encyclopaedia of Purāṇic Beliefs and Practices*, New Delhi, 1986-90, Vol. I, pp. 38-39; Vol. IV, p. 1248.
[8] *Taishō*, XXI, p. 403b.

> brāhmaṇa, was allowed to obtain water any time he was thirsty, by merely invoking the help of Kṛṣṇa. One day while Uttaṅka was walking in the desert, he developed a relentless thirst and thus sought its alleviation by Kṛṣṇa in his mind. At that moment a naked, ferocious looking caṇḍāla (mātaṅga) hunter appeared carrying bow and arrow, leading a pack of dogs, his body caked with dirt and sweat. The hunter poured copious water from his urinary organs and bade Uttaṅka to drink. The holy man refused. After the hunter went on his way, Kṛṣṇa appeared. Feeling that he had been tricked, Uttaṅka chastised the god saying, "It wouldn't be proper for you to offer water to me in the form of a hunter's urine." Kṛṣṇa replied, "It was my intention to request Indra to grant you heaven's nectar of eternal life (*amṛta*), but Indra was obstinate and agreed to assist only if he could appear as a hunter to give you water. However, you were confused by the caṇḍāla disguise and made a great mistake by refusing to drink." Nevertheless, Kṛṣṇa kept on granting Uttaṅka his wish and sent rain clouds to the desert whenever the holy man requested them.

Uttaṅka, who was fooled by appearances, had not yet transcended the stage of purity and pollution in everyday society. He still regarded receiving anything from the hand of a caṇḍāla to be a humiliating disgrace, and ended up doubting the god as a result. What this tale imparts is that under any circumstances one must never falter in one's absolute trust and faith in Kṛṣṇa, the greatest of all the gods. As a means to dramatizing such faith, the two extremes of varṇa society are brought into confrontation.

Those who have realized ultimate knowledge——that is, those who know *Brahman* as the supreme principle——have completely overcome all attachment to this world and have reached a state of freedom and *nirvāṇa*. For them all things are equal. Concerning this stage of sagehood, the *Mahābhārata* (VI, 27, 18: *Bhagavad Gītā*, V, 18) states, "Wise men look upon brāhmaṇas who have amassed knowledge and discipline as no different from cows, elephants, or even dogs and śvapākas (caṇḍālas)." In this passage as well, the view of equality held by the sage is emphasized by utilizing the extremes of varṇa society.

4. Examples from Buddhist Literature (1): The Wise Caṇḍāla and the Brāhmaṇa

We have already seen how Buddhist writings, especially the *Jātakas*, describe the reality of social discrimination against caṇḍāla. On the other hand, all the inferior classes, beginning with the caṇḍālas, were perceived as religiously equal in the early Buddhist teachings; that is to say, they, like any other member of society, could hold correct religious beliefs, live moral lives, disown the world, and practice the teachings of the Buddha. Caṇḍālas were as capable of religious redemption as any-

one else.

In order to emphasize the basic Buddhist precept that the true value of a human being was not in his or her "birth," but rather in the goodness or evil of their present deeds and the presence or absence of virtue, the literature frequently brings the two extremes of Indian society, brāhmaṇas and caṇḍālas, into confrontation. In one of the oldest pieces of Buddhist scripture, the *Suttanipāta* (v.136-v.142), the Buddha, in reply to a question posed by a fire worshipping brāhmaṇa by the name of Bhāradvāja, tells of a dog killer and caṇḍāla by birth named Mātaṅga, who attained great fame for both his knowledge and deeds; thus drawing many kṣatriyas and brāhmaṇas to serve him, despite being born into such an inferior status, and upon his death proceeded to Brahmaloka (the World of Brahman). At the same time, the Buddha states that even brāhmaṇas from very honorable families and well-versed in the Vedic *mantras*, who repeatedly commit evil, are vilified in this world and will be reborn into depravity. The following well-known phrase comes from this episode (vv. 136, 142).

> One does not become inferior due to his birth, nor does one become a brāhmaṇa by birth. It is one's deeds that determine whether one is an inferior or a brāhmaṇa.

A brāhmaṇa and a caṇḍāla also appear in the story of Mātaṅga contained in the *Jātakas* (IV, pp. 375-90).

> In a past world there lived in the environs of Bārāṇasī a caṇḍāla by the name of Mātaṅga, who was a previous birth of the Buddha. His wisdom and knowledge earned him the name of Mātaṅgapaṇḍita; and after marrying a disowned daughter of a wealthy family, he renounced the world without having consummated the marriage. He then acquired supernatural powers, which enabled him to take the form of Mahābrahmā and amass a great deal of donated wealth that made his wife a very wealthy woman. This caṇḍāla sage employed his powers to impregnate his wife with a son, after which he cloistered himself in the Himalayan mountains. The son studied the Veda, but grew up surrounded by arrogant, greedy brāhmaṇas, whom he wined and dined lavishly and frequently. As soon as he got wind of this situation, Mātaṅga, the hermit, flew to Bārāṇasī in an attempt to return his son to the right path. Instead, he was ridiculed and laughed at for his shabby appearance, then chased away. When the *yakkhas* found out about what happened, they were angered and twisted the necks of the son and his brāhmaṇa cohorts, paralyzing them. Mātaṅga's wife, in hope of saving her son's life, fed him and his friends a gruel made from leftovers received from the hermit, and they were able to move their bodies as before; but when it was discovered that they had partaken of a caṇḍāla's

> leftovers, they were banished from the brāhmaṇa community.
> Mātaṅga returned to seclusion in the mountains for a while, then moved to a place near the hut of a brāhmaṇa ascetic, who boasted of his varṇa origins. One day, in the presence of a crowd Mātaṅga made a laughing stock out of the pompous priest. However, when he came to his next destination, Mejjha, he was killed by the king at the request of the local brāhmaṇas. After his death Mātaṅga was reborn in the Brahmaloka, and the angered gods then brought down the kingdom of Mejjha.

In another *Jātaka* (III, pp. 27-30), a caṇḍāla (*chavaka*),[9] who was a previous birth of the Buddha, criticized a brāhmaṇa who had the king sit in a higher seat while giving a lesson in sacred knowledge. It seems that the brāhmaṇa had accepted this lowly position after yielding to the temptation of the lavish meal offered by the king.

What is being criticized and ridiculed in these tales is the greed and arrogance shown by brāhmaṇas, and their antagonists were portrayed as caṇḍālas for the apparent purpose of making the criticism and ridicule more dramatic.

We have already mentioned the infinite care that brāhmaṇas took to ensure their personal cleanliness and purity. The following two tales from the *Jātakas* criticize these ideas as meaningless.

> A young man born of a very noble brāhmaṇa family, while suffering from intense hunger on a journey, received the leftovers from the box lunch of a caṇḍāla traveler, who was a previous birth of the Buddha, and ate them. Then the young brāhmaṇa began to regret his actions, saying, "I have done something unbecoming of my birth and family, by eating the food left by a caṇḍāla." He then regurgitated the food, which was mixed with blood. Then he thought further, "What is the meaning of living after having done such an egregious act?" He then hid himself in the forest and died in isolation. (II, pp. 82-85)

> There was once a young brāhmaṇa who was very proud of his noble birth. He had occasion to leave his home, and on the way back he met a man (a previous birth of the Buddha), whom he demanded to identify himself. "I am a caṇḍāla," replied the man, thus alarming the young brāhmaṇa that he might be caught downwind from this wretch and become polluted. "Keep downwind of me, you ill-omened caṇḍāla!" ordered the young brāhmaṇa, hurrying to the upwind side of the trail. However, the caṇḍāla was quicker and beat him to the upwind side. Realizing that the young man was a brāhmaṇa, the caṇḍāla decided to challenge him to a test of knowledge. After the brāhmaṇa lost, the caṇḍāla made the hapless young man crawl under his legs. Later the young brāhmaṇa was scolded by his teacher for the arrogance he had shown. (III, pp. 232-34)

[9] *chavaka=śvapāka/śvapaca*. L. Alsdorf, "The Impious *Brāhmaṇ* and the Pious *Caṇḍāla*," in L. Cousins *et al.* eds., *Buddhist Studies in Honour of I. B. Horner*, Dordrecht, 1974, p. 13, note 2.

5. Examples from Buddhist Literature (2): The Caṇḍāla King and the Brāhmaṇa

The *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna*, which is contained in the *Divyāvadāna*, a Sanskrit work written later than the Pāli scripture cited above, around the third and fourth centuries AD, is an interesting story of the clash that occurred between the Buddhist and the brāhmaṇa ideas concerning caṇḍālas. The story goes like this.[10]

> One of the Buddha's closest followers, Ānanda, was begging for alms in the city of Śrāvastī, when at a well he met a caṇḍāla (mātaṅga) girl by the name of Prakṛti, and asked her for a drink of water. She at first hesitated, then told him that she was a mātaṅgī. Replying that he had no interest in either her family or birth, Ānanda took the water, drank it, then went on his way. Prakṛti fell in love with him and begged her mother tearfully to allow her to be with him. Her mother did not know what to do at first, but in the end acquiesced to the girl's wishes and used an incantation (a *caṇḍālamantra*) to guide Ānanda to their house. The Buddha, who was then at the Jetavana-vihāra, sensed Ānanda's dilemma and used his supernatural powers to free his pupil from the curse. The young girl was very upset, but the mother replied that she was no match for the Buddha's magic.
> The next morning, Prakṛti was waiting for Ānanda at the city gate and set off behind him while he begged for alms. He decided to return to the Jetavana-vihāra and seek the Buddha's help once again. After listening to Prakṛti's side

[10] *Divyāvadāna*, XXXIII, *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna*, pp. 314-425. Concerning this tale of the mātaṅga king, there are the following Chinese versions: *Mo-têng ch'ichu ching* (*Mātaṅga-sūtra*, 2 vols; *Taishō*, XXI, pp. 399c-410b) and *Shê-t'ou-chien-t'ai-tzŭ-êrh-shih-pa-hsiu-ching* (*Śārdūlakarṇa-uparāja 28 nakṣatrasūtra*; *Taishō*, XXI, pp. 410b-419c). According to the Epics and Purāṇa literature, Triśaṅku was born into the famous kṣatriya Ikṣvāku family based in Ayodhyā and had been reborn twice as a caṇḍāla as the result of curses cast upon him by holy men. The first rebirth resulted from his insulting treatment against the holy man Vasiṣṭha, while he was a prince; the second stemmed from his foolish desire, after succeeding to the throne and governing justly, to ascend to heaven with his mortal body intact. (V. Mani, *op. cit.*, pp. 794-95). Buddhist adherents may have used the king's name to create a tale to dramatize their position on varṇa society.

of the story, the Buddha called her parents to him and received permission for Ānanda to take the girl. The Buddha then asked Prakṛti, "Are you ready to wear the same clothing as Ānanda?" "Yes," she replied; and the Buddha allowed her to renounce the world. Suddenly, all of Prakṛti's hair fell out, and her body became wrapped in a *saṅgha* robe. From that time on Prakṛti enthusiastically followed the Buddha's teachings and became an upstanding *bhikṣuṇī*.

Hearing of this extraordinary occurrence, in which a caṇḍāla girl had renounced the world, King Prasenajit and many citizens of Śrāvastī went to the Jetavana-vihāra in order to discover the Buddha's true intentions in the affair. The Buddha sat before a group of his followers and others and related the following story from a past world.

In a past time, there was a kingdom populated by mātaṅgas located in a forest along the banks of the Ganga. The king of this country, by the name of Triśaṅku, was a wise man versed in all fields of learning, beginning with the Veda, and had also remembered the knowledge which he had learned in his previous lives. His son Śārdūlakarṇa was not only wise, but also a very handsome prince. The king proceeded to search for a woman who would be the suitable wife for the prince and finally decided that only Prakṛti, the daughter of Puṣkarasārin, would suffice. Puṣkarasārin was a brāhmaṇa of great learning and virtue born to a noble family in a brāhmaṇa village in a northeastern kingdom.

King Triśaṅku led an entourage of his ministers and subjects to a forest bordering Puṣkarasārin's village, and they met one day while the brāhmaṇa was leading a group of his followers into the forest. The king spoke to Puṣkarasārin, saying, "*Bho*, give me your daughter in marriage. The amount of the remuneration is no object." Angered by having been addressed as "*Bho*" by a mere mātaṅga, for only brāhmaṇas were allowed to use the term, Puṣkarasārin abruptly refused, saying "Caṇḍālas must marry caṇḍālas; brāhmaṇas must marry brāhmaṇas." To this the king replied, "Brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas, śūdras, they are just names, as human beings we are all equal." Puṣkarasārin became even more incensed, and reminded the king of the principles of the varṇa system, then emphasized the fact that caṇḍālas are inferior even to the śūdras, while brāhmaṇas rank above all the varṇas. The king replied, "If indeed the four varṇas originated from the mouth, arms, thighs and feet of the creator Brahmā, it would follow that all are Brahmā's children. If so, then all human beings would be equal. Plants and animals may vary in form among their different species, but humans take the same form regardless of who bore them. At birth there is no difference, only the names bestowed upon us by society differ. Human beings are essentially identical, only the different occupations we engage in have given rise to such distinctions as the four

varṇas. What is more important for us is virtue gained from learning, self-discipline, and wisdom." Puṣkarasārin was at a loss for words and bowed his head to the king.

Puṣkarasārin then began putting questions to Triśaṅku regarding various points of knowledge, which the king invariably answered correctly, showing a command not only of the Veda, but also all the other fields of learning, such as astronomy and divination. Triśaṅku recalled his past lives and related his line of births from Brahmā to Indra, from Indra to the sages, and so on. Puṣkarasārin praised the learning and virtue of the king, called him "*Bhagavat*" and "the equal of Mahābrahmā." Then he gave his consent for his daughter to marry the prince. His followers objected, but Puṣkarasārin explained to them the eminence of Triśaṅku. And so it was that Śārdūlakarṇa and Prakṛti were wed, and Triśaṅku's kingdom continued to prosper.

After relating this story, the Buddha concluded, "In that previous time I was Triśaṅku, Ānanda was Śārdūlakarṇa, Śāriputra was the brāhmaṇa Puṣkarasārin, and *bhikṣuṇī* Prakṛti was his daughter."

In this story, we find the caṇḍāla who wins a debate with a brāhmaṇa to be a king in his own right, as well as having experienced existences as gods and sages in his past lives. The super-human abilities of our caṇḍāla protagonist here is similar in image to the meat peddling hunter we encountered in Section 2 above. However, in that episode the hunter is portrayed as essentially orthodox in his thinking, by looking upon "his own *dharma*" as absolute, in accordance with the principles of the varṇa system. In contrast, the caṇḍāla king of the Buddhist tradition claims that varṇa distinctions are nothing but names, thus opposing orthodox thinking and recognizing marital relations across varṇa lines.[11]

We have already seen that marriage between a man of superior varṇa and a lower varṇa woman was considered as *anuloma*, and recognized as quasi-legal by orthodox thinkers. On the other hand, marriage between a woman of superior varṇa and a man of a lower varṇa was considered to be *pratiloma* (against the order of things) and was tabooed. Therefore, the worst scenario in such a situation would be a marriage between a śūdra man and a brāhmaṇa woman. The Hindu legal classics explain that any child from such a marriage would become a caṇḍāla. It is from this standpoint that the story of the marriage between caṇḍāla Śārdūlakarṇa, of an inferior status to even a śūdra, and the brāhmaṇa girl Prakṛti has shock value. In addition, the part about the Buddha himself being a caṇḍāla in one of his past lives stems from essential Buddhist doctrine insisting that the worth of any human being

[11] In the *Vajrasūci*, said to be the work of Aśvaghoṣa, there is a criticism of varṇa social institutions almost identical in methodology to the tale of the caṇḍāla king quoted here. S. Mukhopadhyaya ed. and tr., *The Vajrasūci of Aśvaghoṣa*, Santiniketan, 1950.

does not depend on his birth, but rather on the virtue he has attained in the present life through his actions, wisdom, etc. The story of the caṇḍāla prince Śārdūlakarṇa and his brāhmaṇa wife Prakṛti is an excellent way of impressing this principle deeply in the minds of listeners.

6. Conclusion

From the above discussion, we can draw the following conclusions.

To begin with, most of the people who were called caṇḍāla in ancient India could trace their origins to hunters and gatherers living in the forest. From the standpoint of agrarian society——that is, Aryan society under the varṇa system——these people were not only looked down upon, but often feared as well. One portion of these forest people came to populate varṇa society as its most inferior element. In their daily lives, the members of varṇa society looked upon these caṇḍālas as unclean, and thus took great pains to avoid both direct and indirect contact with them, discriminating them against in every aspect of social life.

Secondly, in some aspects transcending daily life, there were cases in which the view of caṇḍāla as unclean was overlooked. The first case is related to the *dharma*. That is to say, the *darma* was considered to be above such concepts as purity and pollution; and as a result, there was the possibility, albeit extreme, for a caṇḍāla to teach it. The editors of the *Mahābhārata*, which stood firmly on the ideas of orthodox brāhmaṇas, present such an extreme argument, while at the same time recognizing its danger and trying to avoid it.

Thirdly, another aspect of transcending daily life was situations of peril and threat to life, in which the mundane ideas of purity and pollution could be ignored. Both the *Manu-smṛti* and the *Mahābhārata* contain episodes describing direct encounters between the extreme social poles of brāhmaṇas and caṇḍālas, in order to impress upon the reader the absolute character of the *āpaddharma*, which should be applied in such perilous situations.

Next, the final aspect of transcending daily life was the idea that the supreme God and holy men existed over and above the purity and pollution of everyday life. In Section 3, we saw how encounters between brāhmaṇas and caṇḍālas were used to explain the extraordinary, transcendent character of God and holy men.

Finally, there is the role of Buddhism in attempting to refute orthodox brāhmaṇa thinking about social stratification based on birth, by arguing that the value of a human being is in the knowledge and virtue one has achieved as an individual. The tales quoted in Sections 4 and 5 use brāhmaṇa-caṇḍāla encounters to illustrate this point of view in the most extreme case.

From both the Hindu classics and Buddhist tales quoted in this chapter, we must not assume that social discrimination against untouchables in ancient India

was relatively light or relaxed. Given the fact that the lifting of social restrictions was discussed only to dramatize very exceptional cases and arguments, the exceptions that we have seen here prove all the more the cruel and vicious discrimination and bigotry heaped upon persons of caṇḍāla status in the course of everyday life.

However, we must also recognize that the various legal stipulations and tales quoted above all show that frequent contact——social, economic and cultural——existed between caṇḍālas and the other members of society including brāhmaṇas. This is a situation that points to the formation of a multifaceted Indic culture, to which forest people, like the ancestors of the caṇḍālas, made various important contributions. For example, the goddesses, tree gods and snake gods whom the forest people worshipped were incorporated into Aryan culture, thus enriching its religious beliefs. Also, the art of sorcery that was transmitted from generation to generation among them[12] played an important role in the development in tantrism within both Hinduism and Buddhism, but this is a subject that must be taken up in future studies.[13]

[12] At the beginning of the tale about the caṇḍāla king and the brāhmaṇa cited in Section 5, the sorcery of a caṇḍāla woman is mentioned. It is thought that such power was an object of fear among the agrarian population. Sorcery practiced by a caṇḍāla woman is also mentioned in the well-known legend of Aśoka (*Aśokāvadāna*), in which the queen, who has come to detest the bodhi-tree of Buddhagayā, pays a mātaṅga woman versed in witchcraft to cause the tree to wither and die. The mātaṅga woman thereafter utilizes different magic to revive the withered tree. See *A-yü-wang-ch'uan* (*Aśoka-rāja-avadāna; Taishō*, L, pp. 104c-05a) and *A-yü-wang-ching* (*Aśoka-rāja-sūtra; Taishō*, L, p. 139a-b). *Divyāv.*, pp. 254-55.

[13] As time went along Buddhist groups began to adopt the orthodox brāhmaṇa discriminatory ideas concerning caṇḍālas. Particularly, in the Mahāyanā sūtras, one finds statements that caṇḍālas are untouchable sinners. On the other hand, elements of caṇḍāla sorcery can be found in esoteric Buddhist scripture. See Y. Miyasaka, *Indogaku Mikkyōgaku Ronkō* (Studies in Indology and Esoteric Buddhism), Kyoto, 1995, pp. 67-153 (in Japanese).

Epilogue

EVOLVEMENT OF THE VARṆA / CASTE SYSTEM IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

Historians tend to differ regarding how to periodize India's ancient and medieval eras. Here "medieval India" will refer to a period beginning with the fall of the Gupta Dynasty (sixth century AD) and continuing up to the seventeenth century. Further, I prefer to divide this period into early and later parts, divided somewhere around the twelfth-thirteenth century. For the purpose of understanding the transition that the ancient varṇa system went through in medieval India, it will be sufficient to limit the discussion to "the early medieval period in northern India."

What happened after the fall of the Gupta Dynasty in terms of politics, economy, society and religion can be summarized in the following seven points:

1) Political decentralization and the formation of multiple, regionally based dynasties.
2) The rise of medium and small scale feudal lords (an intermediary ruling class) and the development of patron-client relations based on land holding.
3) The decline of cities and stagnation of extensive commerce and industry.
4) The spread of small scale trade and economic self-sufficiency on a region-by-region basis.
5) Reorganization of the village community based on caste.
6) The decline of urban-based Buddhism and the growth of rural-based Hinduism.
7) A flourishing of rich, regionally-based cultural traditions.

Although many of these developments have their roots in the ancient period, their interaction and combined influence began to bring about tangible changes in India from the sixth century on. Here we will deal with the problem of how the medieval caste system developed within the framework of a changing ancient varṇa social order.

As discussed in the chapters dealing with the vaiśya and śūdra varṇas, over time the orthodox Vedic ritual distinctions made between the two varṇas —based on a twice-/once-born dichotomy— tended to disappaear into vaiśyas as the varṇa of the merchant class, and śūdras as commoners (mainly agrarian peasants). As a result, the latter became members of the "Caste-Hindu" along with the twice-born varṇa members, with untouchables forming the lowest echelons of society. It is this dual caste-hindu/untouchable structure of social discrimination that has survived to

the present day.

By claiming to be the descendants of ancient kṣatriyas, the kings of the various regional dynasties that divided northern India amongst themselves after the fall of the Gupta Kingdom upheld the ideals of the varṇa system and their traditional rights of kingship, while at the same time putting brāhmaṇas under their protection. The epigraphical sources from the period record donations of land and villages to brāhmaṇas on a more considerable scale than in ancient times. Under royal protection, brāhmaṇas were given the opportunity to propagate and instill the ideas of a society based on the varṇa order in the minds of the people. That is to say, accepting one's fate in the present world would lead to a better one in the next.

Medieval India saw the penetration of Hinduism into rural society, as more brāhmaṇas began to settle in villages as local priests in the form of an occupational caste, organizationally similar to artisan and untouchable castes within rural society. These local brāhmaṇas were instrumental in instilling varṇa/caste values in rural Hindu communities.

Despite its ancient origins, the varṇa/caste ideology, which aimed at rigidly settling the social order once and for all, had a great impact on a period characterized by the decline of unorthodoxy (Buddhism) and the development of Hinduism. It can be characterized as none other than the establishment of caste society "from above." Within this process, the customs and practices of existing social groups—occupational groups, tribes, endogamous clans, etc.—were transformed into social and religious caste codes of conduct, which their own members enforced on one another as social and religious duties. In other words, each of these groups strengthened their traditional rules concerning endogamy and descent, established various taboos concerning food and other aspects of everyday life, and set up institutions for punishing those who failed to abide by such rules and regulations. In the formation of such exclusionary, autonomous groups, called *jāti*, we observe the establishment of caste society "from below."

One more aspect which coincided with the establishment of castes "from above" was ranking them vertically according to the orthodox varṇa framework, based on purity and defilement; resulting in a ritual hierarchy from the brāhmaṇa caste at the top to castes of untouchables at the bottom. Therefore, what happened was the organization of groups with heterogeneous origins into castes within the framework of varṇa ideology, each with its own unique social function and position. It should also be pointed out that each caste could be redefined depending on political, economic and social vicissitudes, and there are many examples of castes splitting or merging, as well as moving up and down in the social hierarchy. There are also cases of a caste being active in more than one geographical location, resulting in local branches of rank and file members, usually maintaining their own autonomy.

The process of the caste system's formation by no means stops there, for

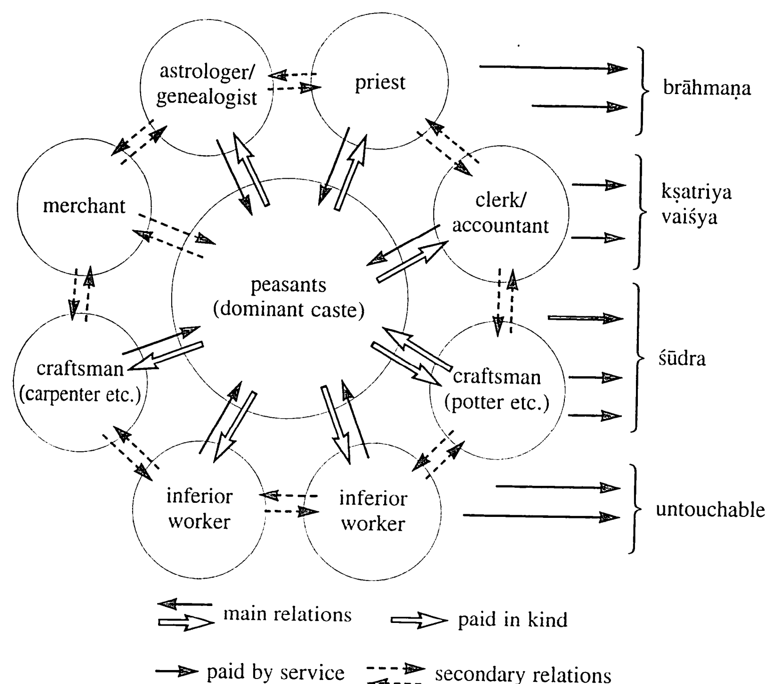
according to surveys done in modern and contemporary India, we find multi-caste villages that were formed connecting various castes along both vertical (ritual) and horizontal (specialization) lines, a system that must have taken centuries or more to form. Here is what may have occurred.

After the fall of the Gupta Dynasty, when political decentralization and the decline of urban-based commerce and industry began, economic activity showed a tendency to be transferred to the rural regions and carried out on a smaller scale. Such a trend resulted in the decline of money economy, especially the use of precious metals (gold and silver) in trade transactions. The regional kingdoms did mint currency in the tradition of the Gupta Dynasty, but the coins were of such poor quality that their issues were small and their spheres of use very limited. Some coastal ports of trade continued to be as active as before and trade was also carried out based on regional cities and towns, but the urban economy which had once traded all over the subcontinent was in decline, giving way to a more self-sufficient regional economy based on land-related means of production. Consequently, villages (or regions made up of villages) increased in economic importance. In contrast to the ancient village, which was organized mainly around cultivators, the medieval village, in response to the regionalization of the economy, was formed into a more complex community characterized by an intricate division of labor among castes.

Under such conditions, playing the central economic role in the village were landholding peasants, who were composed of cultivators occupied as such since ancient times, śūdras who had raised their social position and acquired land, as well as some tribal forest people who had turned to agriculture, all of whom were now treated as śūdra varṇa members. For the first several centuries of the medieval period, these agricultural groups were gradually organized into agrarian castes throughout every region, and successfully prevented the economic incursion of other castes, protecting their own livelihood. These agrarian castes became the dominant groups in village society, producing its headmen and leading elders. On the other hand, rights over the land held by these peasant castes were appropriated from another direction due to the royal practice of donating villages and the growth of an intermediary ruling class.

In order to maximize the output of agrarian productive forces in a climate alternating between rainy and dry seasons, it was necessary to mobilize large amounts of labor over limited amounts of time; however, it was impossible to keep the workers needed for the busy agricultural season settled in villages throughout the whole year. On the other hand, with the further organization of occupations into castes, combined with the penetration of Hindu ideas about maintaining purity and avoiding defilement, the amount of services required from other castes in order to conduct one's daily life increased. For example, it became necessary for villagers not only to obtain priests to preside over their ceremonies, but also to request the ser-

Inter-Caste Relations in the Village
Formed through the Medieval Period



vices of carpenters, potters, barbers, launderers and the like, who had all been organized into exclusionary castes. Therefore, in order for daily village life to proceed as smoothly as possible, the dominant cultivating castes began to guarantee a livelihood and dwellings to the members of non-agrarian castes and bring them in as "village-sponsored" providers of services. These non-agrarian castes, with some exceptions like brāhmaṇas or the most defiled among untouchables, also provided labor to the cultivator castes during the busy agricultural seasons, thus allowing the village to maintain both the purity required for its residents and a reliable source of labor for cultivation.

Within this process of village reorganization, those tribal or despised peoples who were living on the periphery of agrarian society also organized themselves into

castes to guarantee their survival, scattered and settled in villages, taking charge of "defiled" occupations and services and becoming providers of cheap labor during busy agricultural seasons. These castes, who had become indispensable to village life as untouchables, functioned to relax tension caused by inequality and add the kind of order and stability to the village community that its leaders and landholders desired.

For the members of these castes who scattered and went to settle in agrarian villages, "village sponsorship" offered the opportunity to enjoy certain privileges as village members, such as rights to use dwellings, cultivate the small plots of arable land attached to them, forage in the surrounding forests for firewood, flowers and food, and earn extra income at the time of ceremonies and festivals. They were also provided products and services from other non-agrarian castes in exchange for theirs, enabling them to live lives in accordance with strict and complicated caste rules.

Of course, not every medieval village was replete with all the castes necessary to conduct daily life, and thus were forced to search for labor and services from other villages in a certain region. Moreover, while caste members existed as active participants in the economic life of their respective village communities, they also maintained close ties to fellow caste members scattered throughout the region. In other words, although village life was characterized by self-sufficiency, there were also wider regional aspects.

The medieval village, woven into such a vertical and horizontal (interdependent) structure formed within the framework of varṇa/caste system, was characterized by a high degree of stability, leading to similar degrees of stability on both the regional and state levels. It is for this reason that the ruling classes, both aristocratic and intermediary, favored the varṇa/caste system and at times resorted to active political intervention in order to maintain it.

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